Oriental Bird Club

Special Issue on Thailand

Bulletin 31 • June 2000

The Oriental Bird Club aims to:

- encourage an interest in the birds of the Oriental Region and their conservation
- liaise with and promote the work of existing regional societies
- collate and publish material on Oriental birds

Two bulletins and a journal, *Forktail*, are published annually.

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Membership of the Club is open to all and for 2000 costs £15 per annum (£10 reduced rate for nationals living in Oriental countries who cannot afford the full rate), £20 Family, £25 Supporting Member (funding one Oriental member in addition to ordinary membership), £25 Libraries and academic institutions, and £45 Business Supporters. Special arrangements for payment exist in USA, Thailand and India. To join or for further details please contact the Membership Secretary, OBC, c/o The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire, SG19 2DL, UK.

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http://www.orientalbirdclub.org/

Cover illustration:
Siamese Fireback *Lophura diardi* by Kamol Komolphalin

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  Tim Inskipp

Letter from the Chairman

Nigel Collar

Thailand and the slow extinction of Gurney's Pitta

This issue of the *Bulletin* is a Thailand special, and we hope that it inspires many readers to visit the country in the near future to experience its distinctive mix of ornithological and cultural sensations. There is, as the saying goes, so much to see.

But however long the potential tick-list may be, one species may soon be missing. And since this is quite definitely the greatest Thailand special of the lot, we have good reason to be alarmed. Despite letters sent to the highest levels by BirdLife International and the Oriental Bird Club, Gurney's Pitta lost more habitat this last winter at its one known site, Khao Nor Chuchi, and nothing was done to stop it happening. I promised in the last issue that OBC would not let such a thing pass without raising its voice and taking a stand.

In late March and early April Brian Sykes (OBC Secretary), Marcus Kohler (Chairman, OBC Conservation Committee) and Tony Juniper (Policy Director, Friends of the Earth) visited Thailand to consult with Thai experts and sympathisers to put together a plan of action for Gurney's Pitta. Their report in this issue makes grim but gripping reading.

For almost 15 years conservationists have been trying to save Gurney's Pitta at Khao Nor Chuchi. The history of their various efforts deserves one day to be written up as a tribute to the passion and commitment of dozens of nature-lovers who cannot bear the thought of losing so wonderful a species. Starting with a handful of volunteers – Marcus Kohler was one – the work steadily grew into a major co-operative programme between Denmark and Thailand, and one which should have clinched it for the pitta. Hundreds of thousands of dollars were spent in demarcating the wildlife sanctuary at the site, training the staff, mapping the forest area, developing management agreements for forest outside the sanctuary, and building local support through economic livelihood schemes and the promotion of tourism.

But the Thai Government has failed to deliver on its side of the bargain. The Royal Forest Department (RFD) has a *statutory responsibility* to protect forest inside wildlife sanctuaries. Yet right now there are houses inside the sanctuary, there are gardens and plantations and, since the beginning of this year, there is a 5 ha clearing which was once the territory of one of the last remaining pairs of Gurney's Pittas.

How can this be? How can it be that the sanctuary employs something in the order of 30 staff, most of them locally recruited but three of them directly appointed by the RFD, and nothing was done to stop this destruction? The cutting that took place this year was done by hand, so it must have taken the best part of a month. And nobody apparently noticed it.

The problem of Gurney's Pitta is now primarily one of enforcement. Those outside the government of Thailand have done everything they can to set the scene for the saving of Gurney's Pitta. What more they can do in the future is what OBC has been exploring this spring. But the fact remains that none of it is do-able without the protection of the wildlife sanctuary and the implementation of the forest management agreements. This is down to the RFD. Its failure to date is a discredit to the great country we feature in these pages.

New Oriental boundaries

Last year OBC Council unanimously resolved to implement an idea long championed by former Chairman Colin Poole, to expand the borders of the region the Club covers to include the Russian Far East, the Korean Peninsula and Japan.

This means, of course, that we are no longer 'Oriental' in the biogeographical sense, but at this stage of our development we felt it important to become more inclusive. This gives us new scope for extending our membership base into areas where strong birdwatching movements already exist, and thereby building new friendships which will help promote the enjoyment, study and conservation of birds throughout East Asia – many of which, of course, nest in the newly embraced areas and pass the winter in the region we have covered ever since our inception.

We aim to bring out special issues of the *Bulletin* in the next few years which will deal with some of these new regions and countries.

Club News

Reports of recent Club meetings and events:

BirdLife Conference Malaysia October 1999

Thanks to the good offices of the MNS Bird Conservation Council in the form of OBC members Allen Jeyarajasingam and Glenda Noramly, the OBC had a stand at the BirdLife International Conference at Genting Highlands. The stand, which was staffed mainly by Allen Jeyarajasingam and Brian Sykes, incorporated information about the plight of Gurney's Pitta, and the opportunity to discuss the present problems with delegates was taken. OBC sales items were very successful with pin badges being a sell-out. The meeting was a great opportunity to meet the many OBC representatives who attended and a number of changes to the OBC representatives network were agreed, including the appointment of Dr Ding Chang-Qing (Peoples' Republic of China), Neil Aldrin Mallari (Philippines) and Dr Fang Woei-horng (Taiwan, Republic of China).

The OBC 'Group' is pictured in front of the OBC stand

AGM 1999

The 1999 AGM was well attended with more than 100 members present. Sadly Chairman Nigel Collar missed this, his first AGM as Chairman, due to urgent business in Indonesia, Secretary Brian Sykes deputised. Those present enjoyed talks by Tim Loseby on 'Birds, Lions & Wild Asses of Gujarat', Pete Morris on 'Birds of Korea & Japan — a welcome addition to the Orient' and Eric Lott on 'Birds of southern India'. Our thanks go to the speakers for their interesting and varied presentations. Thanks go also to Steve Rowland for leading a very lively discussion by the members present about possible ways in which the Bertram Smythies legacy to the Club might best be used. The discussion produced some new ideas for Council to explore.

As usual the winners of the 1999 Forktail-Leica and OBC-WildWings Conservation Awareness Award were announced during the meeting and full details are given in the Conservation Fund report. A shadow was cast over the proceedings due to the shocking news of the death of Cambodian Sam Veasna, winner of the 1999 OBC-WildWings Award, from cerebral malaria a few days before the meeting. Condolences were sent on behalf of the Club to Veasna's widow and three sons.

Announcements:

OBC Plaque commemorates Sam Veasna's work

As reported above, news of the sudden death of Sam Veasna was received in early December. His loss has dealt a cruel blow to conservation in Cambodia and a full obituary on Veasna's life is published on page 8 of this Bulletin. After consultations with former OBC Chairman, Colin Poole, now based in Cambodia, Council agreed

OBC Secretary and Treasurer, Brian and Margaret Sykes, presenting a special OBC plaque to Veasna's widow to commemorate Veasna's work to commission a plaque from the Club to commemorate Veasna's work as part of the Club's tribute to him. The plaque was presented to Veasna's widow by the Club Secretary and Treasurer, during their visit to Cambodia in February 2000.

Changes on OBC Council

Council members Seb Buckton, Richard Eden and Debbie Pain stood down at the AGM. Thanks to them all for their contribution to the Club. Particular thanks go to Richard Eden for his huge contribution as Promotions Officer. We certainly hope to see him and his mother, Freda, helping on the OBC stand during the 2000 British Birdwatching Fair.

New members of Council elected at the AGM were Mike Edgecombe, Tim Loseby and Duncan Macdonald.

Gurney's Pitta – thanks for pledges and donations

An update on the situation is given elsewhere in this issue. Council wishes to take the opportunity to thank all those people who have made pledges and donations great and small and for the other offers of help that have been received.

Mega Prize Draw 2000

The Annual OBC Mega Prize Draw continues to be the major fundraiser for the OBC conservation projects. The first prize in 2000 will be a Leica APO-Televid 77 Telescope, value about £800, together with an excellent collection of CDs and brand new books as runner-up prizes. A book of ten draw tickets (tickets are priced at £1.00 each) is included with this Bulletin for all Club members with UK postal addresses, but the draw is not restricted to UK members only! If you live outside the UK and would like to win the 'scope and support conservation, send your payment (GBP £10 per book of 10 tickets or GBP £1.00 for each ticket) by GBP cheque or credit card to OBC Mega Prize Draw c/o The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire, SG19 2DL, UK. Alternatively you may give your credit card details by email to the OBC Treasurer at mail@orientalbirdclub.org. The tickets will be filled out with your name and included in the draw which will take place on Sunday 27th August.

Remittances and ticket stubs should be returned to the Club not later than Friday 11th August.

OBC Expedition 2001

The OBC expedition to the Cordillera Central of Northern Luzon announced in Bulletin 30 will go ahead as planned between April and June 2001. It will be led by Council member Phil Benstead and the other members of the team are at present being finalised. Unfortunately there was insufficient interest in the 'EarthWatch style' volunteer part of the project and this has been cancelled.

Are you a UK taxpayer?

From 6th April 2000, every time a UK taxpayer makes a donation, the OBC can reclaim the tax and increase the value of the donation by 28% at no extra cost to the donor. It is not too late to donate to the Gurney's Pitta appeal or indeed to make a general donation to the conservation fund. Send your donation to the Treasurer, who will deal with the new Gift Aid paperwork on your behalf.

Help the Club by making a bid

By bidding for one or more of the following, you can help the OBC Conservation Fund.

- 'Maroon Oriole'. A painting by Lalmalsawma. This painting was reproduced on the cover of Bulletin 28 and has been generously donated by the artist to raise funds for conservation.

- 'Birds of Burma'. The Club has two copies of this famous pioneering work donated to the Club by the author, the late Bertram Smythies.

The first is a 1st Edition published by the American Baptist Mission Press, Rangoon 1940. Only 2000 copies were printed and many were destroyed in an air raid. The book is in very good condition (a little adhesive tape damage) and includes the original wrapper (fair condition, in two pieces). It is inscribed by the author to his parents.

The second is a 2nd Edition published by Oliver & Boyd, Edinburgh, in 1953. This edition was rewritten by the author in 1948 following the loss of the 1st edition stock. The book is in excellent condition, including the wrapper, and is also inscribed to the author's parents.

If you are interested in acquiring any of the above, please send your bid to the Club address at 'The Lodge', marked 'OBC Bids', as soon as possible.

Forktail 16

Forktail 16 is scheduled for publication in August 2000 and will be available at the British Birdwatching Fair. Please will all members visiting the BBWF call at the OBC stand and pick up their copy. In 1999 the Club saved almost £200 in mailing costs thanks to members collecting *Forktail* 15 at the fair.

New designs – OBC T-shirts and sweat shirts

The new designs are a complete departure from traditional OBC designs and feature the simple stylish Club 'Forktail' logo. They will be produced in bottle green and royal blue and should be available by the time you read this notice. Please see the enclosed sales leaflet for details of prices and sizes.

Kamol Komolphalin, the well known Thai artist, is working on a new T-shirt design featuring birds of Thailand which it is hoped will be ready in time for the 2000 BBWF.

OBC is connected

Members are reminded that the Club operates a well-received and very comprehensive website at: http://www.orientalbirdclub.org

Members may contact the Club by email and contributions for the Club publications, membership renewals, sales orders and general enquiries may be sent to the following address: mail@orientalbirdclub.org

Members are also reminded that the Club sponsors an email discussion group focused on wild birds, birding and conservation in the Oriental region. All are welcome to join. To sign up simply send an email, which may be left blank, to orientalbirding-subscribe@egroups.com

OBC meetings and events during 2000

OBC visits the North-East – 24th June 2000

The OBC is pleased to announce an all day meeting run jointly with the Northumberland and Tyneside Bird Club on 24th June. The venue is the first floor lecture theatre of the University of Newcastle, Claremont Tower, Claremont Road, Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

Doors will open at 09.30 am with the introduction and first talk at 10.00 am. The speakers will include Nigel Collar, Chairman of OBC, Pamela Rasmussen from the Smithsonian Institution, Washington DC and Brian Sykes, OBC Secretary.

During the lunch break (12.30 pm–2.00 pm approx) there will be an opportunity to examine the collection of skins in the Hancock Museum across the road from the meeting room. The interesting items include Herbert Stevens' Oriental collection dating from the early years of the 20th Century.

Refreshments will be available all day. *WildSounds*, the OBC bookseller, will bring a selection of books, videos, CDs and tapes for sale.

A vist to the Farne Islands is planned for Sunday 25th June. Why not make a weekend of it?

For further information and to make a reservation to visit the Farnes, please contact Adrian Pitches, by telephone at 0191 272 8547 or by email adrian.pitches@bbc.co.uk

British Birdwatching Fair, August 2000

The 2000 British Birdwatching Fair will be held between 18th–20th August at its usual venue Rutland Water. The event is still the most important opportunity for the Club to 'meet the public', raise funds for conservation and attract new members, as well as greeting old friends. The OBC welcomes members visiting the fair to come to the Club stand, say hello *and pick up their copy of Forktail 16*. There will be a wide range of items for sale, including T-shirts (new designs), publications, trip reports, and more. Tickets for the 2000 Mega Prize Draw will of course be on sale throughout the event.

The OBC will again be involved in a number of events during the course of the fair, including the 'Conservation Cup' five-a-side football competition which attracted a lot of interest in 1999. As ever, Council is looking for volunteers to help the Club during the fair, by working on the stand, selling raffle tickets for the Mega Prize Draw etc. Please will any one prepared to help for half a day (or longer!) contact: The Secretary OBC c/o The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire, SG19 2DL, UK or by email mail@orientalbirdclub.org

Blakeney OBC Meeting

The traditional OBC autumn meeting at Blakeney will take place this year on Sunday 27th August. Please put the date in your diary. We hope that Dick Filby will be able to officiate once again. The programme and speakers will be announced later in the year. As in 1999, there will be a final opportunity to purchase raffle tickets for the Mega Prize Draw and the draw will be made at the end of the meeting. Please watch for details in the press, on the Club website or the OBC email discussion group 'OrientalBirding'.

PASOC October 2000

The second Pan Asian Ornithological Congress will be held between 23rd–29th October 2000 in Kandy, Sri Lanka. The Club is hoping to have a small stand at this event. Will any member willing to help with this please contact the Secretary.

Annual General Meeting, London, 9th December 2000

The OBC Annual General Meeting will be held in London on Saturday 9th December. The venue has not yet been confirmed and will be announced later in the year.

Expansion of the region

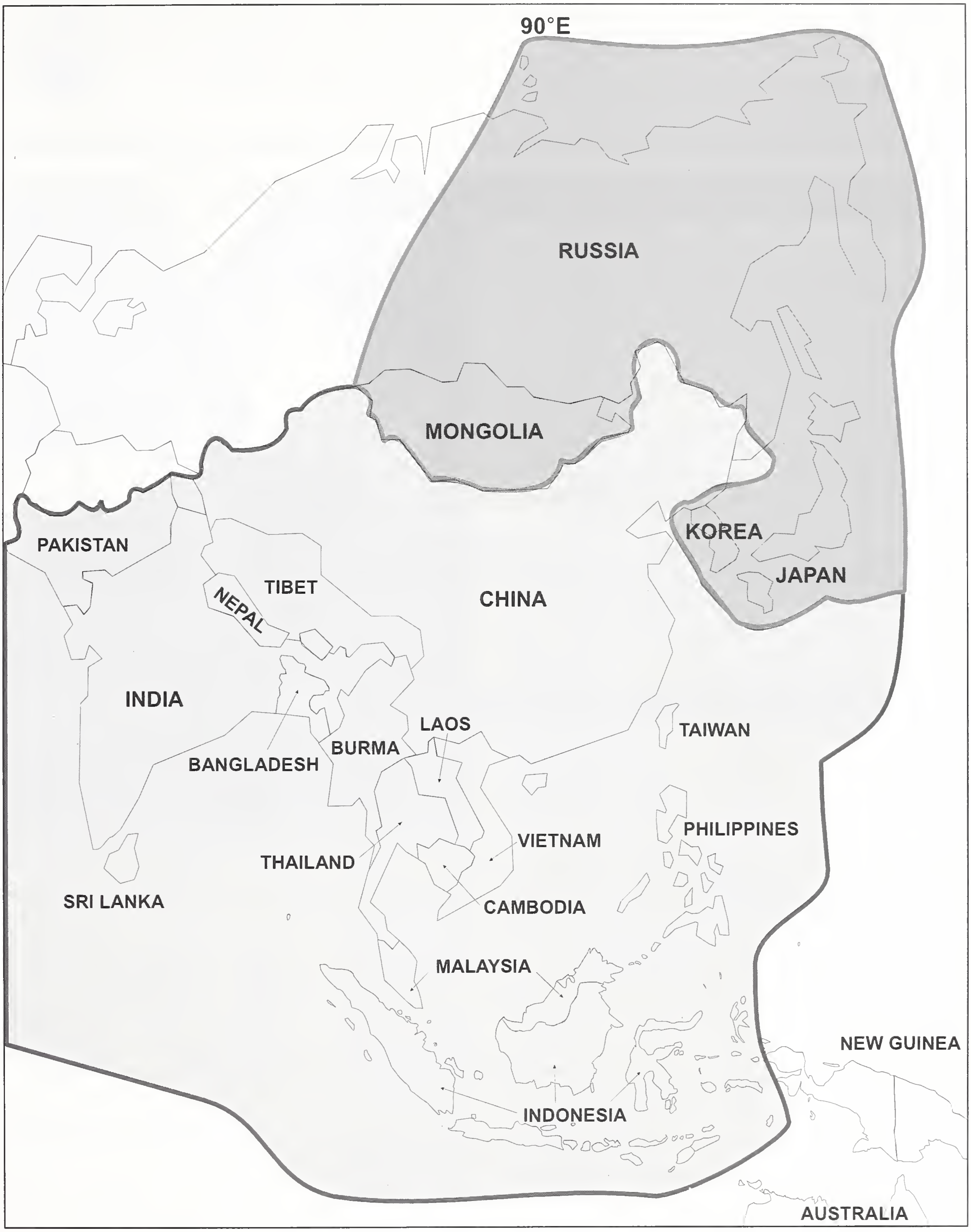
As mentioned in the Chairman's letter, Council recently took the decision to expand the region covered by the Club to include the Russian Far East, the Korean Peninsula and Japan (see map overleaf). Although this means a huge increase in the land area covered by the Club, there are relatively few additional bird species that are not already included in the official OBC Checklist. The additional species are listed below. No doubt the inclusion of Budgerigar and Rufous Hummingbird will raise a few eyebrows; the former is an introduced species living wild in parts of the region, and the latter is a very rare vagrant.

Species occurring in Japan, Korea, Mongolia and Russia (E of 90°E) that are not listed in *An annotated checklist of the birds of the Oriental region*

	Japan	Korea	Mongolia	Russia
Copper Pheasant *Syrmaticus soemmeringii*	X			
Ross's Goose *Anser rossii*				X
Emperor Goose *Anser canagica*	X			X
Canada Goose *Branta canadensis*	X	X		X
Crested Shelduck *Tadorna cristata*	X	X		X
American Black Duck *Anas rubripes*		X		
Redhead *Aythya americana*	X			X
Ring-necked Duck *Aythya collaris*	X			
Common Eider *Somateria mollissima*	X			X
King Eider *Somateria spectabilis*	X			X
Spectacled Eider *Somateria fischeri*				X
Surf Scoter *Melanitta perspicillata*	X			X
Barrow's Goldeneye *Bucephala islandica*		X		
Bufflehead *Bucephala albeola*	X			X
Budgerigar *Melopsittacus undulatus*	X			
Rufous Hummingbird *Selasphorus rufus*				X
Brolga *Grus rubicunda*				X
Eskimo Curlew *Numenius borealis*				X
Slender-billed Curlew *Numenius tenuirostris*	X			
Spotted Sandpiper *Actitis macularia*				X
Black Turnstone *Arenaria melanocephala*				X
Short-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus griseus*	X			
White-rumped Sandpiper *Calidris fuscicollis*				X
Wilson's Phalarope *Steganopus tricolor*	X			X
Semipalmated Plover *Charadrius semipalmatus*				X
Iceland Gull *Larus glaucoides* (inc. *thayeri*)	X			
Bonaparte's Gull *Larus philadelphia*	X			
Franklin's Gull *Larus pipixcan*	X			
Ivory Gull *Pagophila eburnea*	X			X
Red-legged Kittiwake *Rissa brevirostris*	X			X
Dovekie (Little Auk) *Alle alle*				X
Common Murre *Uria aalge*	X	X		X
Thick-billed Murre *Uria lomvia*	X			X
Black Guillemot *Cepphus grylle*				X
Pigeon Guillemot *Cepphus columba*	X			X
Spectacled Guillemot *Cepphus carbo*	X	X		X
Kittlitz's Murrelet *Brachyramphus brevirostris*	X			X
Cassin's Auklet *Ptychoramphus aleuticus*				X
Parakeet Auklet *Cyclorrhynchus psittacula*	X			X
Crested Auklet *Aethia cristatella*	X			X
Whiskered Auklet *Aethia pygmaea*	X			X
Least Auklet *Aethia pusilla*				X
Horned Puffin *Fratercula corniculata*	X			X
Tufted Puffin *Fratercula cirrhata*	X			X
Bald Eagle *Haliaeetus leucocephalus*				X
Pallas's Cormorant *Phalacrocorax perspicillatus*				X
Common Loon *Gavia immer*				X
Black-winged Petrel *Pterodroma nigripennis*	X			
Mottled Petrel *Pterodroma inexpectata*	X			X
Gould's Petrel *Pterodroma leucoptera*				X?
Pycroft's Petrel *Pterodroma pycrofti*	X			
Stejneger's Petrel *Pterodroma longirostris*	X			
Juan Fernandez Petrel *Pterodroma externa*	X			
Providence Petrel *Pterodroma solandri*	X			X
Varied Thrush *Zoothera naevia*				X
Grey-cheeked Thrush *Catharus minimus*				X
Swainson's Thrush *Catharus ustulatus*				X
Tree Swallow *Tachycineta bicolor*				X
Cliff Swallow *Hirundo pyrrhonota*				X
Ruby-crowned Kinglet *Regulus calendula*				X
Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus*	X		X	X
Japanese Accentor *Prunella rubida*	X			X
Fox Sparrow *Passerella iliaca*	X			X
White-crowned Sparrow *Zonotrichia leucophrys*	X			X
Golden-crowned Sparrow *Zonotrichia atricapilla*	X			X
Dark-eyed Junco *Junco hyemalis*				X
American Tree Sparrow *Spizella arborea*				X
California Towhee *Pipilo crissalis*				X?
Yellow-rumped Warbler *Dendroica coronata*				X
Northern Waterthrush *Seiurus noveboracensis*				X
Rusty Blackbird *Euphagus carolinus*				X

Erratum

In the previous issue of the *Bulletin*, the Free Press citations for various articles in *Bird Conservation International* were incorrectly given as Volume 9. All these references should have referred to Volume 8 although the page numbers are correct.



The region now covered by the Oriental Bird Club

(light grey shading = old region; dark grey shading = expanded region)

Obituary

Sam Veasna

Sam Veasna, Head of the Provincial Wildlife Department in Siem Reap province, Cambodia and winner of the 1999 OBC-WildWings Conservation Awareness Award, died in early December 1999. Veasna contracted cerebral malaria during fieldwork in Anlong Veng, northern Cambodia, and died shortly afterwards. His premature death was a great shock to those who were privileged to know him, work with him and consider him a friend. Veasna attended the BirdLife World Conference in Malaysia last October, where he was astounded to find out the world was full of bird-crazy nuts like himself: in Cambodia he was one in a million.

Veasna was a single-handed force for conservation in northern Cambodia. During his tragically short life he had already achieved more than most will do in a lifetime. Without him, the reserve for Sarus Cranes *Grus antigone sharpii* at Ang Trapeang Thmor, northern Cambodia, would never have been declared (see *OBC Bull.* 30: 20). He discovered the non-breeding population of Sarus Cranes and, with financial support from the Taiwan Wildbird Information Centre through the Wild Bird Society of Japan and the International Crane Foundation, Veasna carried out much work, both on the birds and in the surrounding communities. It was this work and his lobbying that provided the basis for the reserve's designation, and one of his last tasks was to draw up the reserve boundaries.

In June 1999, as the recipient of an OBC small grant for surveying potential Sarus Crane sites, he discovered significant populations of both Bengal Florican *Houbaropsis bengalensis* and White-shouldered Ibis *Pseudibis davisoni* in Kompong Thom province. Later in 1999 he was awarded the prestigious 1999 OBC-WildWings Conservation Awareness Award to carry on important work in the province. Preliminary research had shown that both species, especially the floricans, were suffering heavy levels of exploitation from hunting. Sadly, Veasna never lived to receive the OBC-WildWings award, which was given to him posthumously. Veasna's work will go on through his counterpart staff from the Kompong Thom Provincial Wildlife Department and with the continued financial support from the OBC and technical support from the Wildlife Conservation Society.

Veasna's loss leaves a huge void in wildlife conservation in Cambodia. Our hearts go out to his wife and three young children. In his memory, two endowment funds are planned, the first to support his wife and children, and the second, the Sam Veasna Foundation, to support Cambodians to carry out conservation activities, particularly the kind of fieldwork which Veasna loved so much. Contributions to either of these funds are welcomed. Enquiries should be addressed to Colin Poole, Wildlife Conservation Society, P O Box 1620, Phnom Penh, Cambodia. Email poole@bigpond.com.kh

Colin Poole, Wildlife Conservation Society, Cambodia

Conservation Fund

Compiled by Marcus Kohler with additional contributions from Anny Andaryati, Phil Benstead, Andy Clements, Mike Crosby and Carol Inskipp

CORPORATE SPONSORS

Our usual pleasure at announcing the winners of the two major awards for 1999 is somewhat overshadowed by the tragic death of Sam Veasna, the winner of the 1999 OBC-WildWings Conservation Awareness Award. A full obituary occurs in this Bulletin, but everyone involved in the Conservation Committee would like to add their condolences to his friends and family. We are delighted that Frederic Goes is to continue the pioneering work of Veasna in Cambodia by accepting the award.

The 1999 Forktail-Leica Award has been made to T R Shankan Raman for his work on habitat fragmentation in the Western Ghats of India.

In addition, nine small grants have been awarded out of the 24 proposals considered: three in India, two each in Nepal and China and one each in Thailand and Vietnam.

1999 OBC-WILDWINGS CONSERVATION AWARENESS AWARD

Survey and awareness campaign for the conservation of Bengal Florican in Kampong Thom province, northern Cambodia

The 1999 OBC-WildWings award was given to the Forestry and Wildlife Department of Siem Reap, led by Sam Veasna, for his project to survey and undertake a conservation awareness campaign for the endangered Bengal Florican *Houbaropsis bengalensis* in Kampong province, Cambodia.

The project aims to determine the status and population of Bengal Floricans in the area (together with other endangered species) and locate important sites and breeding grounds. The project will initiate an environmental education campaign, including production of a brochure for distribution to schools, stakeholders and authorities, and organise meetings with local authorities and schools.

Local wildlife protection officers will be trained in survey methodologies, bird identification and data collection for future survey work. Veasna was delighted to receive this award and, despite his untimely death, it was decided that the project should still go ahead. It is hoped that the work on Bengal Floricans, now led by Frederic Goes, will be a fitting tribute to a dedicated conservationist.

FORKTAIL-LEICA AWARD 1999

Rainforest birds in the Anamalai Hills, India

The 1999 Forktail-Leica Award of £1,500 was made to T R Shankar Raman to examine the impact of fragmentation and plantations on rainforest birds in the Anamalai Hills, southern Western Ghats. The Western Ghats mountain chain is amongst the world's biodiversity hotspots and has been identified by BirdLife International as an Endemic Bird Area with 16 restricted-range species, including several that are regarded as globally threatened. Severe threats from human disturbance due to deforestation, developmental activities, conversion to plantations and habitat fragmentation currently affect the region. Since 1920 it is estimated that forest cover declined by 40%, resulting in a four-fold increase in the number of forest fragments and an 83% reduction in the size of forest patches. Recent studies have highlighted the need to study the impact of such habitat changes on birds. The present-day landscape of the Anamalai Hills is a mosaic of man-made habitats (plantations, reservoirs, developed areas) and rainforest fragments. The main study area will be the Indira Gandhi Wildlife Sanctuary which supports 12 Western Ghats endemics. The results will be compared with those from an earlier intensive study by Shankar Raman of rainforest bird communities in more than 400 km^2 of relatively undisturbed and continuous rainforests of the Agasthyamalai region. The project will identify possible remedial management measures. Key forest fragments that require protection or specific management intervention will be identified and brought to the notice of authorities and conservationists. Popular articles are also planned to help promote awareness to conserve the forest.

SMALL GRANT AWARDS

Saunders's Gull survey at Huangqi Rai and Chagannur, Inner Mongolia, China

The globally threatened Saunders's Gull *Larus saundersi* is only known to nest at a few coastal localities in mainland China and at one site in South Korea. However, there have been several reports of this species from inland wetlands in Inner Mongolia in northern China, including recent sightings at Huangqi Rai and Chagannur Lakes. Huangqi Rai is a freshwater lake surrounded by marshes (with an area of 68 km^2) and Chagannur is saline and surrounded by brackish marshes (covering a total area of 110 km^2). The aim of this project is to survey the birds of these two lakes, which are likely to support many nesting waterbirds, particularly to determine the identity of the gulls which occur there (and possibly breed). Threatened waterbirds likely to be encountered include Swan Goose *Anser cygnoides* and several crane species.

Study of Nilgiri Laughingthrush, Tamil Nadu, India

A small grant of £500 has been awarded to Dr Lalitha Vijayan to study the Nilgiri Laughingthrush *Garrulax cachinnans*, an Indian endemic which has recently been listed as globally threatened by BirdLife International. The species is restricted to the upper ranges of the Nilgiri Hills, mainly above 1,200 m in the Western Ghats. It is confined to a specialised habitat of montane shola forests, which are at risk from large-scale conversion. A preliminary study has revealed that habitat degradation is adversely affecting the Nilgiri Laughingthrush and the species needs immediate conservation attention. The aims of this study are to estimate the population of the species and recommend conservation measures.

Effects of habitat alteration on Broad-tailed Grassbird and White-bellied Shortwing, Western Ghats, India

A small grant of £500 has been made to Dr Gopinathan Maheswaran to investigate the effects of habitat changes on the survival of two endemic Indian species confined to the Western Ghats. Both species are included in BirdLife International's forthcoming Asian Red Data Book and are threatened by habitat loss. The Broad-tailed Grassbird *Schoenicola platyura* occurs in high-altitude grasslands and the White-bellied Shortwing *Brachypteryx major* inhabits lower-altitude scrub forests. Surveys will be carried out during the breeding season to identify the present strongholds of both species and to estimate their current status and quality of their habitat. Recommendations for the conservation and improvement of their respective habitats will be made.

Bird survey of Eaglenest and Sessa Orchid Sanctuaries, Arunachal Pradesh, India

A small grant of £500 has been made to Dr Anwaruddin Choudhury to survey a poorly known complex of two contiguous protected areas in the Eastern Himalaya. These two sanctuaries cover a combined 370 km^2 and range altitudinally from 150 m to 3,100 m, incorporating a diversity of habitats in a relatively small area. The area is likely to prove important for several threatened species including Blyth's tragopan *Tragopan blythii*, Chestnut-breasted Partridge *Arborophila mandellii* and Rufous-necked Hornbill *Aceros nipalensis*. The project aims to determine the distribution, status and threats to these and other threatened species and prepare an action plan for their conservation.

Wintering ecology of Oriental Storks in East Dongting Lake National Nature Reserve, China

East Dongting Lake is one of the vast wetlands in the lower Yangtse valley. It provides wintering habitat for at least 120 species of migratory birds, including the globally threatened Oriental Stork *Ciconia boyciana*, Lesser White-fronted Goose *Anser erythropus*, Swan Goose *A. cygnoides*, Baer's Pochard *Aythya baeri*, Great Bustard *Otis tarda*, Hooded *Grus monacha*, White-naped *G. vipio* and Siberian *G. leucogeranus* Cranes. It is one of the most important sites for the Oriental Stork, normally supporting a wintering population of 300–400 birds out of a total population that may be as low as 3,000 individuals. There is evidence that substantial mortality of Oriental Storks occurs on passage and in winter, and the aims of this project are to improve understanding of their ecological requirements whilst wintering at East Dongting Lake and the main threats that they face there. The project will be conducted in close co-operation with the reserve staff, and recommendations will be made about how to improve the conservation of Oriental Storks and their habitats in the reserve and elsewhere in the Yangtse valley.

Conservation awareness for schoolchildren in Chitwan, Nepal

A small grant of £500 has been awarded to Narayan Dhakal of the King Mahendra Trust for Nature Conservation for a project in the buffer zone of Royal Chitwan National Park. The project team of the Nepal Bird Education Society aims to raise awareness amongst schoolchildren of river pollution and deforestation as major threats affecting bird conservation in the area. A bird newsletter will be published in Nepali and a birdwatching camp will be held for local children. It is hoped that the children will understand the potential of nature guiding as a future employment opportunity and also inform their parents about the damaging activities of river pollution and deforestation.

Bengal Floricans in Suklaphanta, west Nepal

Bijay Tamang and Nabin Baral have been given a small grant of £435 to assess the status and distribution of Bengal Florican *Houbaropsis bengalensis* in Royal Suklaphanta Wildlife Reserve, western Nepal. The work will build on previous surveys elsewhere in Nepal and will update information, which is now ten years old, from Suklaphanta. Group discussions with park officials, game scouts, nature guides and villagers will aim to raise awareness of the conservation of this threatened species, and stakeholders will receive copies of the survey report.

Youth camp and bird species basic database at Pangfan Nature Observation Centre, Thailand

A small grant of £500 has been awarded to Sanguan Chantalay to organise a youth camp at Pangfan Nature Observation Centre (PNOC). The PNOC is located in Maelao village within the boundaries of Maelao-Maesae Wildlife Sanctuary. The village has an agreement with the Royal Forest Department that allows them to continue to carry on their traditional way of life, provided that the local environment is conserved.

The project aims to improve local children's birdwatching skills, promote bird conservation awareness amongst the community and extend awareness of threatened species. The camp particularly aims to highlight the plight of the Red-whiskered Bulbul *Pyconotus jocosus* in northern Thailand and prevent the illegal hunting of this species for the cage-bird industry which is having a serious impact on wild populations (see *Letter to the Editor*, this issue).

Black-faced Spoonbills at the Red River Delta, Vietnam

Yu Yat Tung has been awarded a small grant of £500 to undertake studies on the wintering habitat requirements of Black-faced Spoonbills *Platalea minor* in Vietnam.

The world population of Black-faced Spoonbills is estimated to be around 600 individuals and more than 80% of them winter on the east coast of Taiwan, around Deep Bay in Hong Kong and at the Red River Delta in Vietnam.

This project aims to study the wintering habitat requirements of this species at the Red River Delta and will complement studies on the species being undertaken in Hong Kong by Yu Yat Tung.

CONSERVATION FUND IN ACTION

OBC has received reports since *Bulletin 30* detailing the results of three OBC-WildWings Conservation Awareness Awards, a report by Sam Veasna on Sarus Cranes in Cambodia, and the report of a unique conservation awareness project in Indonesia.

OBC-WildWings Conservation Awareness Award 1996: Raising conservation awareness in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, India

The Andamans and Nicobars form a group of about 350 islands off the east coast of India. They cover an area of about 8,200 km^2, about 90% of which is forested. At present 38 islands are inhabited and the total human population is estimated to be about 400,000 with recent settlers from India and neighbouring countries now outnumbering the indigenous peoples. The islands are a biodiversity hotspot and form two Endemic Bird Areas. They support 15 endemic bird species, six found only on the Andamans, five only on the Nicobars and four on both groups of islands. The islands are narrow and steep, making them highly vulnerable to soil and water erosion. Clearing of forests for settlements and logging, large-scale soil erosion, degradation of freshwater sources, sand-mining and the unwise use of natural resources are some of the problems facing the islands.

It was in this context that an environmental education programme was begun on the islands by Kalpavriksh, a Delhi (and now Pune) based non-governmental organisation, together with the Andaman and Nicobar Islands Environmental Team in collaboration with the Directorate of Education in the islands. Sponsorship has largely been provided by the Government Ministry of Human Resource Development. As part of the ongoing environmental education programme, an OBC-funded poster has been produced with photographs and a map of the islands.

The main purpose of the programme is to make teachers and educators aware of the unique environment in which they live, the problems that threaten the islands and then to enable the teachers to share this knowledge with their students. A teachers' manual on the environment of the islands, published in English and Hindi, has been used in a series of workshops that have covered about 30% of the schools, mainly at the primary level. Each workshop included 2–3 environmental activities/games and a session on art and craft as an example of how learning could be child-centred and fun. There was also an exhibition of educational material. A field trip was made to either a mangrove forest, tidal pool area, coral reef or an evergreen forest.

2,000 copies of the OBC-funded poster have been printed and distributed, not only in schools, but also for awareness work with the Forest Department, administration and the general public, including tourists.

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Deccan Gymkhana,
Pune 411004, India

Slaty-backed Forktail *Enicurus schistaceus* by Kamol Komolphalin

OBC-WildWings Conservation Awareness Award 1997: Initiating a nature conservation programme in girls schools in northern Pakistan

In 1997 the OBC-WildWings Award funded a conservation awareness project in selected girls schools in the district of Chitral in northern Pakistan. The project aimed to raise awareness of the migratory birds passing through the district and the impact of hunting these birds. Teachers were very supportive and the schools proved to be a good platform for educating young girls about the value of birds. The project concentrated in schools in four towns. Workshops were held to train teachers to understand the concept of environmental education and how to set up a nature club and organise suitable children's activities. An activities book has been produced to help teachers further with these aims.

Fourteen nature clubs have been established which have attracted 300 members — 10% of students in the targeted schools. Following the success of this project, it is hoped that the nature club network can now be extended to other schools in the district.

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University of Peshawar, Peshawar, Pakistan

OBC-WildWings Conservation Awareness Award 1998: Avifauna conservation awareness programme in the south-western buffer zone of Royal Bardia National Park, Nepal

Great Hornbill *Buceros bicornis* by Kamol Komolphalin

The 1998 OBC-WildWings Conservation Awareness Award fully funded an Avifauna Conservation Awareness Programme in the buffer zone of Royal Bardia National Park in the south-western lowlands of Nepal. Several globally threatened species have been recorded in the park including Bengal Florican *Houbaropsis bengalensis*, Pallas's Fish Eagle *Haliaeetus leucoryphus*, Lesser Adjutant *Leptoptilos javanicus* and Grey-crowned Prinia *Prinia cinereocapilla*. The park's buffer zone is an area of the park greatly affected by significant crop damage and harassment by local people of park animals.

The main objective of the programme was to create awareness of bird conservation amongst local inhabitants in the project area, including children, local farmers and schoolteachers. Workshops, a training programme, interaction programme, field trips to the park and day camps for schoolchildren were organised to achieve this goal.

A total of three workshops, each lasting two days, on avifauna conservation was organised for local farmers, local leaders and teachers. Topics covered included bird conservation and importance of the birds found in the park, the benefits of bird conservation and the roles of local farmers, teachers and politicians in these processes.

A three-day training programme on bird identification was organised for eight local youths; local children, aged eight to twelve years, from Betani village were taught about bird conservation and then asked to spread the message around the village. Brief sessions were held to teach the children about the importance of birds, conservation problems and the role of young children in protecting and conserving birds. At the end of these, all the children who had catapults agreed to hand them over and promised not to kill birds again. A total of 130 catapults was collected.

In close collaboration with the Royal Bardia National Park staff, an Avifauna Information Centre has been established at the park headquarters. Basic information is presented on important avifauna and sites for bird observation in the park, habitats of endangered bird species in the park and basic techniques used to watch birds.

A total of four bird observation day camps, each with 15 students attending, was organised amongst schoolchildren from three secondary schools in the buffer zone area.

Shant R Jnawali and Chiranjibi Pokharel

Environmental awareness for Bandung communities: the garden birds approach, Indonesia

In 1999, Yayasan Pribumi Alam Lestari (YPAL, the Indigenous Nature Conservation Society) was awarded £500 to carry out an environmental awareness programme. Two main parks/public gardens in the city of Bandung, West Java, Indonesia, were chosen with the intention of introducing visitors to the parks to birdwatching activities and to increase their awareness of bird conservation issues.

Twenty-two Sunday morning birding sessions, led by volunteers from YPAL, were conducted over the period from April to October 1999. These efforts were strengthened by the production of 2,900 leaflets and 5,000 stickers which were handed out to visitors, other conservation NGOs, schools, universities and government institutions. Two information boards were posted in the two parks to help visitors to identify birds when no volunteers were present.

As a result of these endeavours, a local birdwatching club has been formed that will continue the Sunday birdwatching sessions.

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Indonesia

Survey for Sarus Crane and other threatened bird species in southern Kampong Thom province, Cambodia

WildSounds

WildSounds generously sponsored this outstanding project, which was OBC's first to be undertaken in Cambodia. The late Sam Veasna led a team of four Cambodian forestry officials in a survey to locate and determine the status of Sarus Crane *Grus antigone* and other threatened species in southern Kampong Thom province, Cambodia. The project also sought to identify the threats to these species, investigating the pet and food trade in birds, and undertook field training of Wildlife Protection Officers in bird survey techniques. Finally, conservation awareness activities were undertaken within the villages in the area.

The survey recorded 48 bird species during five days fieldwork, including five globally threatened species (Greater Adjutant *Leptotilos dubius*, Lesser Adjutant *L. javanicus*, White-shouldered Ibis *Pseudibis davisoni*, Bengal Florican *Houbaropsis bengalensis* and Spot-billled Pelican *Pelecanus philippensis*) and four near-threatened species (Sarus Crane, Asian Openbill *Anastomus oscitans*, Painted Stork *Mycteria cineria* and Black-headed Ibis *Threskiornis melanocephalus*).

Although the survey did not find significant numbers of Sarus Cranes (only four birds seen in flight), highly significant records of other endangered species were recorded. Most notable was the sighting 20 White-shouldered Ibises, believed to be the largest flock ever recorded.

The survey recorded several Bengal Floricans from Tropeing Rompeak and Boeng Prabel, with further evidence suggesting that a reasonable population persists in the area. The survey also recorded the second highest count of Greater Adjutant in Cambodia, with 34 recorded at Veal Anh Chan.

The investigation of the trade in birds revealed that all larger species are threatened by capture for the pet trade and hunting, with Bengal Florican being particularly vulnerable. Discussions with traders revealed that Bengal Florican is regarded as a local delicacy, and between 300–600 birds are caught each year. This means the Cambodian population is probably the most significant in the world, but that it is likely to be suffering non-sustainable hunting pressure. Additionally, there was a reliable report of a Giant Ibis *Pseudibis gigantea* being captured in the area in August 1998 and later sold for food.

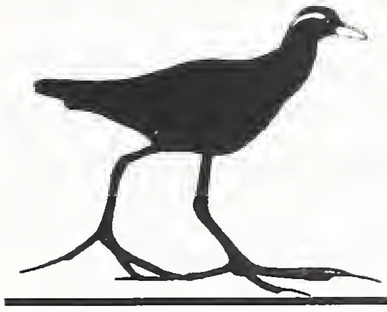
Wildlife dealers are targeting Sarus Crane, Black-necked Stork *Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus* and to a lesser extent both adjutant species.

The survey team also supervised environmental educational work and video shows were screened in two villages, attended by almost 900 people, and posters and field guides were distributed within 12 villages in the Steung Sen district. Meetings were held with the Forestry and Wildlife Department of Kampong Thom Forestry Department, where it was agreed to monitor the food trade in Bengal Floricans and to call for enforcement by local authorities of the law protecting large waterbirds from hunting.

The report recommended development of a strategy to stop the food trade in Bengal Floricans, to pursue enforcement of wildlife protection regulations, to carry out further research on key species and to seek clarification on the status of Sarus Crane and Giant Ibis.

Provincial Forestry Department
Sam Reap
Cambodia

Coral-billed Ground Cuckoo *Carpococcyx renauldi* by Kamol Komolphalin



Around the Orient

Compiled by Adrian Pitches

Bangladesh

Bangladesh Ramsar site declared

Tangua Haor in Sunamganj District, adjacent to the border with Meghalaya, has been declared a Ramsar site. Tangua Haor is one of the largest wetlands in Bangladesh, covering some 10,000 ha, and probably the one in best ecological condition. Several rare species have been recorded there in recent years including several hundred Baer's Pochard *Aythya baeri*, more than 3,000 Ferruginous Pochard *A. nyroca*, record numbers for Bangladesh of Red-crested Pochard *Rhodonessa rufina* and Falcated Duck *Anas falcata*, breeding Pallas's Fish Eagle *Haliaeetus leucogaster* and several reedbed species.

Tangua Haor is the site of a major fishery and the permanent water areas in the wetland are leased out for fishing. However, according to an unnamed Ministry of Environment and Forest spokesperson, the ministry expects to take over management of the wetland when that lease expires on 14th April 2000. The official said "Tanguar Haor is not only the biggest wetland of the country, but also a big sanctuary for waterfowl and migratory birds – so we have to protect it."

Source: *The (Bangladesh) Independent* 14 January 2000

Sundarbans conservation project

A multi-million dollar biodiversity project in the Sundarbans, funded by the Asian Development Bank, is to begin soon. The Bangladesh Sundarbans form, with contiguous areas in West Bengal, the largest single area of mangrove forest in the world and hold an important population of tigers as well as several mangrove-specialist birds such as Masked Finfoot *Heliopais personata*. The project will fund biodiversity conservation and bring different stakeholders into decision-making processes. However, the start of the project has been delayed by wrangling over reforms in the forestry sector aimed at making the Forest Department more conservation-orientated.

Source: Paul Thompson

China

Chinese TV news spotlights Poyang poachers

The Chinese nightly TV news programme Jiao Dian Fang Tan, broadcast nationwide, on 25th November 1999 reported on Poyang Lake, one of China's few designated Ramsar sites, and winter home to large numbers of storks, swans, ducks and geese including Lesser White-fronted Goose *Anser erythropus* and Swan Goose *Anser cygnoides*. It is also home to almost the entire world population of Siberian Cranes *Grus leucogeranus*. The programme visited markets in Yugan and Poyang counties where large numbers of White-fronted *Anser albifrons* and Swan Geese were openly offered for sale and there were hundreds of dead birds waiting to be plucked. Local officials from the forestry bureau, which is charged with enforcing conservation laws, tolerated this practice, as long as dealers (like other stallholders) paid their taxes. Local people showed little interest in wildlife protection. At the lake itself, in Xinjian county, the journalists reported the arrest by Public Security Bureau police of two groups of poachers/trappers, perhaps an action prompted by the presence of the TV news team. At Nanxing Xiang, Nanchang County, people dealing in live swans were arrested and quantities of salted swan and goose meat were found.

The Poyang Lake reserve covers only 5% of the wetland but the reserve staff are not charged with wildlife law enforcement in the unprotected 95% of the Poyang area. Eleven of the wintering bird species enjoy maximum protection under Chinese law, with a further 44 receiving second-degree protection.

Source: *OrientalBirding newsgroup contribution from Jesper Hornskov*

Japan funds Crested Ibis project

The *China Daily* newspaper reported that a US$73,831 grant from the Japanese Government will be used for extension projects in north-west China's Shaanxi province, to protect the natural habitat of the Crested Ibis *Nipponia nippon*, one of the world's rarest species. Speaking at a signing ceremony for the funds, Wang Shousen, vice-governor of Shaanxi and Sugimoto Nobuyuki, Minister of the Japanese Embassy in Beijing, said that they hope the money will augment the Chinese Government's efforts to protect some 200 Crested Ibis, the last remaining wild population of the species.

Source: *OrientalBirding newsgroup contribution from Michael Rank*

Demoiselle Crane flock in Inner Mongolia

A flock of Demoiselle Cranes *Grus virgo* was recorded in Inner Mongolia in August 1997, in the same area where a flock of about 50 Hooded Cranes *Grus monacha* was seen the following summer (*OBC Bull.* 29: 16–17). The Demoiselles numbered 1,100–1,150 and the flock was bigger and earlier than those seen in previous years, with numbers not usually peaking until October, according to local herders interviewed by ornithologists Li Xiaomin and Li Shiliang. The birds were found near a main road in the Xin Bulag area of Hulun Buir district in north-eastern Inner Mongolia.

Source: *Chinese Wildlife* 1998.6

New Chinese provincial bird records

The following species were reported as additions to Chinese provincial lists in the *Sichuan Journal of Zoology* (*Sichuan Dongwu*), 1998. Fujian: Penduline Tit *Remiz pendulinus* (1998.3); Guizhou: Eastern Marsh Harrier *Circus spilonotus* (1998.3); Hainan: Grass Owl *Tyto capensis* (1998.1), Black-shouldered Kite *Elanus caeruleus* (1998.3), Black-browed Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus bistrigiceps* (1998.4); Heilongjiang: Chinese Pond Heron *Ardeola bacchus* (1998.4); Ruddy-breasted Crake *Porzana fusca*, Saunders's Gull *Larus saundersi*.

Source: Michael Rank

China legalises Saker exports

China has decided to allow controlled exports of Sakers *Falco cherrug* in order to curb smuggling, according to a recent official document. Saker smuggling has been rife for some years (*OBC Bull.* 26: 16; *OBC Bull.* 29: 17; *BBC Wildlife*, Nov 1997: 28) with organised gangs from the Middle East active in north-west China sometimes resorting to violence. Xinjiang region has a Saker population of 30,000–50,000 birds. Between July and September about 1,000 smugglers are active in the north-west and thousands of birds are confiscated. In order to curb this racket, the Chinese State Forestry Administration (formerly the Forestry Ministry) has since 1998 adopted a policy of legalising exports of this CITES Category II species whilst at the same time increasing protection of the species in the wild. The document says the policy of "opening the front door and blocking the back door has been successful" and that senior officials from Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Qatar etc have been informed of the need to reduce pressure on the Saker population in China. In 1998 it was decided to permit the export of 110 Sakers, but only 61 were in fact exported. Nevertheless, the document recognises that smuggling remains a problem, and that in September–November 1998 seven batches of smuggled Sakers were intercepted, totalling more than 100 birds. But despite continuing problems, it concludes that legalised exports and a continuing clampdown against smuggling is the best way to protect Sakers in China.

Source: *OrientalBirding newsgroup contribution by Michael Rank*

Zhao Zhengjie (1937–1999)

Chinese ornithology has suffered the loss of Professor Zhao Zhengjie at the age of 62. Prof. Zhao, who was based in Changchun, north-east China, was best known for his research into the globally threatened Scaly-sided Merganser *Mergus squamatus* and Crested Shelduck *Tadorna cristata*, but he also published many articles on other waterfowl, galliformes and passerines. He was the main source of information on the Scaly-sided Merganser in China and also made great efforts to track down the Crested Shelduck, interviewing hunters who had apparently seen this species, which may now be extinct, in the

Changbai mountains in the 1970s and 1980s (*OBC Bull.* 15: 10). Zhao's *Handbook of the Birds of China, vol 1, non-passerines,* was published in 1995 and his daughter Zhao Haiyan expects that volume 2 will be published in August 2000. Friends of Prof Zhao can contact Zhao Haiyan at haiyan88@yahoo.com

India

Indian vultures facing extinction

A recently published paper by V. Prakesh in the *Journal of the Bombay Natural History Society* 96 (3), 1999 gives more information about the continuing massive decline in vulture numbers in India (see *OBC Bull.* 28: 40). The paper finds that the evidence indicates that a disease factor, presumed to be a virus, is responsible for the death of vultures and that, once afflicted, the birds are apparently unable to recover. Autopsies carried out on two birds found dead or dying have shown that the liver and other internal organs were covered with whitish crystals assumed to be uric acid. The situation in India regarding the White-backed Vulture *Gyps bengalensis* and the Long-billed Vulture *Gyps (indicus) indicus* and *G. (indicus) tenuirostris* must now be regarded as critical: extinction of either or both (or possibly all three) species, which were common throughout India until as recently as only three years ago, appears to be inevitable unless the factors responsible for their population decline, which now exceeds 95% in at least some portions of their range, can be identified and corrected.

Source: *World Birdwatch* magazine, March 2000

Pani-Dihing bird sanctuary finally declared

The Government of Assam has finally declared Pani-Dihing as a bird sanctuary, four years after its preliminary notification in December 1995. Located on the floodplains of the Brahmaputra River in Sibsagar district, the sanctuary covers almost 34 km^2 of grassland and several wetlands. Among the globally threatened and near-threatened species found at Pani-Dihing are Spot-billed Pelican *Pelecanus philippensis*, Greater Adjutant *Leptoptilos dubius*, Lesser Adjutant *L. javanicus*, Baer's Pochard *Aythya baeri*, Pallas's Fish Eagle *Haliaeetus leucoryphus*, Long-billed Vulture *Gyps indicus*, White-rumped Vulture *Gyps bengalensis*, Swamp Francolin *Francolinus gularis*, Rufous-vented Prinia *Prinia burnesii* and Jerdon's Bushchat *Saxicola jerdoni*.

Source: Anwaruddin Choudhury

Indonesia

Armed gang steals Bali Mynas

In November 1999 a gang of armed robbers stole 39 Bali Mynas *Leucopsar rothschildi* from their captive breeding cage at West Bali National Park. The robbers, armed with sharp weapons and homemade bombs, also stole a rifle and bullets before handcuffing the park's four guards inside the cage. A single Bali Myna has a street value of around 10 million rupiah and this raid is symptomatic of the desparation felt by many people in Indonesia, following the recent collapse of the Asian economy.

Source: *Jakarta Post*, November 23, 1999

Indonesia's forests vanishing faster than ever

Indonesia's forests are disappearing even faster than studies a few years ago indicated. Despite the proclamations of previous Indonesian governments of a permanent forest estate, with 49 million ha in protected status and another 63 million ha managed for sustainable production, deforestation has continued unabated. In fact it has accelerated and unless something radical is done immediately, Indonesia will lose this precious natural resource which has generated annual export earnings averaging US$3.6 billion in the past three years. Using 1997 satellite imagery, the Ministry of Forestry and Estate Crops has produced forest cover maps for the islands of Kalimantan, Sulawesi and Sumatra which show a shocking loss of more than 17 million ha in 12 years. This is one-quarter of the total Indonesian forest cover that existed in 1985. The ministry now estimates that the nationwide annual deforestation rate is at least 1.5 million ha, nearly twice the estimate published by the World Bank in 1994. Analysis by the bank shows that lowland dry forest, the most valuable type of Indonesian forest for logging and biodiversity conservation, is disappearing quickest. Such forest is essentially defunct as a viable resource in Sulawesi. It is likely to be gone in Sumatra by 2005 and in Kalimantan by 2010.

There many reasons why forests are destroyed. But fires burned more than 5 million ha in 1997 and 1998. Satellite photos show that many of the fires were set by large plantation companies, but none received more than a slap on the wrist from the government of former President Suharto, despite the huge economic cost, estimated at between US$4 billion to US$7 billion, of the fires to the country.

Source: *International Herald Tribune*, 25th January 2000

Destruction of Kutai National Park

Timber companies and plantation firms are destroying East Kalimantan's Kutai National Park. The national park is one of the last great tropical rainforests in East Kalimantan but now measures only about 100,000 ha although it originally covered 198,000 ha. Recently about 15,000 ha of land at the periphery of the park was allocated to accommodate 14,000 families and several mangrove forests have been turned into fish farms.

Source: *Indonesian Observer*, 20th January 2000

Bird-keeping impacts on wild birds

The popular Indonesian pastime of bird-keeping may be having serious impacts on wild populations of native songbirds. A survey has found that several million people, almost one in five Indonesian households, keeps birds as pets. By far the most popular birds are Peaceful Dové *Geopelia striata* and Spotted Dove *Streptopelia picturata*, followed by bulbuls. Laughingthrushes, imported from China, have become increasingly popular. This follows a government ban on the use of native birds in public singing competitions because of worries about trade in native songbirds. Nevertheless, thousands of homes still keep the traditional favourite songbirds: Straw-headed Bulbul *Pycnonotus zeylanicus*, White-rumped Shama *Copsychus malabaricus* and Oriental Magpie Robin *C. saularis*. Also popular as pets are parrots, imported from east Indonesia.

The bird-keeping hobby is centuries old but demand for birds is growing in line with a burgeoning and increasingly affluent human population. Many conservationists are worried that bird-keeping is causing major declines in native bird populations throughout western Indonesia. Species such as the Straw-headed Bulbul, Yellow-crested Cockatoo *Cacatua sulphurea* and Orange-headed Thrush *Zoothera citrina* are close to extinction in many parts of their former range. However, all the popular bird species can be readily bred in captivity and some commercial breeding of songbirds now takes place. A change in attitude amongst consumers is needed: if people refuse to buy birds captured in the wild and opt for those bred in captivity, the market would quickly respond. The fate of some species lies as much with the awareness and attitudes of the Indonesian urban middle classes as it does with government enforcement.

Source: *Jakarta Post*, December 14, 1999

Japan

Decoys lure Short-tailed Albatrosses

Once numbering millions in the North Pacific, the Short-tailed Albatross *Diomedea albatrus* had almost been wiped out by plume hunters by the 1930s, and the last remaining population on Torishima Island, 600 km to the south of Tokyo, was considered extinct after World War II. However, in 1951 a small number was found surviving on a steep slope of this island. Following a slow recovery, the current total population is estimated at around 1,000 birds, with the majority breeding on the remote uninhabited Torishima Island. The steepness and vulnerability of the breeding site on Torishima is mainly responsible for the low breeding success of the birds there. Therefore the Yamashina Institute for Ornithology (YIO), in collaboration with albatross expert Hasegawa Hiroshi, set up 'Operation Decoy' in 1991. The operation uses almost 100 plastic decoys and sound recordings of breeding albatrosses to attract birds to a safer nesting site on the other side of the island. The new breeding ground, named Hatsune-zaki, is monitored by two remote-controlled cameras and so far four chicks have hatched. The solar-powered cameras transmit images *via* a communications satellite to the YIO office in Chiba prefecture near Tokyo. Images from the project can be found on the web pages of Suntory, one of the project's major sponsors. See http://www.suntory.co.jp/culture/birds/albatross1.html#1.

Source: *OrientalBirding newsgroup contribution by Hiraoka Takashi*

South Korea

Another Korean wetland under threat

The Haenam region in south-west South Korea is probably the most important wintering area for waterfowl nationwide — with an estimated 300,000 birds and seven species in internationally important concentrations (as defined by the Ramsar Convention). The most significant of these is the Baikal Teal *Anas formosa*. 168,000 were counted in one flock in January 1999: 160% of the then suspected world population! And a count in November 1999 at two sites, Haenam and Cheonsu Bay, suggested a Korean Baikal Teal population of 250,000–270,000, a new record high. With continuing degradation of other areas in Haenam, most of the waterfowl in winter 1999/2000 were concentrated into a few hundred hectares of Yongam Lake, Dangduri. Surveys in late November at Yongam Lake recorded: Oriental Stork *Ciconia boyciana* 8, Eurasian Spoonbill *Platelea leucorodia* 23–42, Baikal Teal *Anas formosa* c. 100,000, Steller's Sea Eagle *Haliaeetus pelagicus* 1, Imperial Eagle *Aquila heliaca* 2. Recently this core area at Dangduri has been recognised as having great value by the local government (who want to work with the local community to conserve the area) and also by the national government's Rural Development Corporation (RDC) (which is responsible for road and drain building associated with rice-field development in the area). The RDC are developing a master plan for the area and have promised to stop work in the winter to reduce disturbance to waterfowl. However, shortly before the RDC presentation to the government, the RDC stepped up their activities, apparently intent on driving waterfowl out of the area so they could present their master-plan and claim that further "improvements" would not harm waterfowl populations.

Protests against the RDC "improvement" plans are being co-ordinated by the Korean Wetlands Alliance and The Haenam Group for the Conservation of Haenam's Tidal-flats and Waterfowl. Messages of support can be emailed to ecohaenam@hanmail.net or spoonbill@hotmail.com focusing on the area's importance to regional and global biodiversity and requesting that all further "improvements" (such as road and drain building) cease immediately. A similar international email campaign early in 1999 helped delay for a year the world's largest ongoing reclamation project at Saemankeum by the RDC. Further updates on the Haenam situation can be found on Lee Jeong-Sik's website at http://bird.haenam.org/

Source: *OrientalBirding newsgroup contribution by Nial Moores*

Taiwan

Spoonbill stands for president

"Happy", the Black-faced Spoonbill, was a surprise candidate in the Taiwanese presidential elections in March. He was nominated by SAVE Taiwan to focus attention on the KMT Government's plans for an industrial complex on the Bin-nan wetland, which is an important wintering area for Black-faced Spoonbill *Platalea minor*.

Happy, which is a shortened form of the Taiwanese word for Black-faced Spoonbill, was not elected president. But, crucially, neither was the official KMT candidate Lien Chan. The election of pro-independence candidate Chen Shui-bian now provides a ray of hope for the SAVE (Spoonbill Action Voluntary Echo) campaign.

Background: The environmental impact assessment (EIA) for the Bin-nan Industrial Complex was rubberstamped on 17th December 1999. It appeared that the March 2000 presidential election was a factor in the decision, according to the *Taipei Times*, as Lien Chan pandered to business interests. Environmentalists, legislators and local fishermen immediately expressed outrage and SAVE called upon Taiwan's scientific community to speak out.

The controversy over the industrial complex exposed what environmentalists called a large gap between Taiwan's economic development policies and global environmental protection trends, notably the reduction of total carbon dioxide emissions, preservation of biodiversity in wetlands and protecting water resources.

The EIA committee ignored the needs of the Black-faced Spoonbill as no specific plan for preserving their habitat was included in the EIA. SAVE says a 100,000 ha protected area is needed and is pressing for Binnan's designation as a Wetland of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention.

For more information, contact:
spoonbill@uclink4.berkeley.edu
http://www.earthisland.org/save

Source: *SAVE newsletter* posted on OrientalBirding newsgroup

Fairy Pitta petition

The Fairy Pitta *Pitta nympha* is globally threatened. It migrates northward to Taiwan in spring and summer to breed and was formerly abundant in parts of Taiwan, but is now scarce due to habitat destruction.

One of its breeding areas in Pillow Hill, Hu-ben district, is due to be levelled, following government approval for gravel exploitation. However, no environmental impact assessment was carried out and the application was only superficially reviewed. An international petition, organised by the Wild Bird Society of Yun-lin (a partner of the Chinese Wild Bird Federation, BirdLife in Taiwan) and the Hu-ben Community Development Association has been launched to save the local Hu-ben community and their Fairy Pittas.

If you wish to add your name to this petition, please send an email of support to: cwbf@ms4.url.com.tw including details of your name, organisation and nationality. More details can be found at: http://com5.iis.sinica.edu.tw/~cwbf

Source: *Contribution to Orientalbirding by Hugo Phillipps*

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Restoring conservation forests in northern Thailand and the monitoring of frugivorous birds

Birds have an essential role in forest restoration processes. However, we still need more information about numbers, distribution and food of many frugivorous birds. This is an area where birdwatchers can make a significant contribution.

Although Thailand has one of the most extensive systems of conservation areas in Asia, deforestation remains a serious problem. Since the establishment of the country's first national parks in the 1960s, Thailand's forest cover has been reduced from 53% of the country[1] to about 22.8% or 111,010 km^2.[2] Unofficial estimates, however, put Thailand's forest cover at less than 20%.[3] In 1989 the government banned commercial logging; the ban remains in force today. Nevertheless, the annual rate of forest loss remains at approximately 1%. Illegal logging and agricultural expansion are the main causes of deforestation. Consequently, today large parts of the country, including extensive areas in national parks and wildlife sanctuaries, are covered in degraded forest or grasslands dominated by herbaceous weeds. Over most of northern Thailand, large vertebrates such as wild elephants, rhinos and wild cattle are either gone or on the brink of disappearing, and many of the larger bird species such as hornbills are barely surviving. In the south, there is perhaps no better example than the current threat to the last remaining known population of Gurney's Pitta *Pitta gurneyi* at Khao Nor Chuchi, which is discussed elsewhere in this Bulletin (see page 42).

Restoring conservation forests

A positive development in Thailand in recent years has been the rapid increase in public awareness of the problems caused by deforestation. It is now generally accepted that further forest loss will cause more extreme floods and droughts, damage to watersheds, loss of biodiversity and impoverishment of rural communities. Complete protection of all remaining forest is unlikely, due to economic and legal constraints. Therefore, there is a need to maintain the current level of forest cover, or indeed to increase it: deforestation must be balanced by reforestation.

This need is reflected in the National Forest Policy, which stipulates that 40% of the country should be forested, including 25% designated as conservation forest. In an attempt to work towards this target, many former logging concessions were designated as national parks or wildlife sanctuaries after the logging ban. This enlarged the protected areas system to 91 national parks and 42 wildlife sanctuaries, covering more than 73,000 km^2 or 14.3% of the country (as of 24/12/99, data from the Royal Forest Department). Consequently, many conservation areas were already extensively deforested before they acquired protected status. If such areas are to fulfil their statutory functions of wildlife conservation and watershed protection, the native forest must be restored.

Rehabilitation and restoration of degraded ecosystems are extremely important components of *in situ* conservation, as identified in the Convention on Biological Diversity, but research on the biological aspects of the problem has been neglected. Attempts to recreate natural forest ecosystems are hindered by their complexity. Any individual forest type may contain several hundred tree species, each of which may have evolved intricate relationships with hundreds of other organisms, such as herbivores, pollinators and seed-dispersers. Restoration of natural forest ecosystems, therefore, requires a vast amount of ecological information, of which only a small fraction is currently known. We need to understand how forests regenerate naturally, identify the factors limiting regeneration, and develop effective methods to counteract them and thus accelerate regeneration, for example through planting tree seedlings.

The Framework Species Method developed by Nigel Tucker and his colleagues in Queensland, Australia, in the late 1980s[4–6] is a practical method for accelerating forest regeneration. Native tree species that can rapidly shade out weeds and are attractive to seed-dispersing animals are planted in degraded sites. The sites are enhanced for wildlife, by incorporating rotting logs, nest boxes for birds and other wildlife resources. Once established, the trees provide fruit, nectar or perching sites that attract seed-dispersing birds and mammals from neighbouring forest areas. Planting trees begins the process of biodiversity recovery, with wildlife completing the process. In northern Thailand, the Forest Restoration Research Unit (FORRU) is carrying out research to determine whether a similar approach will work there. Researchers at the unit have developed propagation methods to grow a wide range of native forest tree species in nurseries and test their performance and ability to accelerate the return of biodiversity in experimental plots.[7]

The role of frugivorous birds

Whilst most forest birds probably consume some fruit, 17 families contain species that rely on fruit for a large part of their diet. In a recent comprehensive review of this subject, Corlett[8] reported that the most important of these families in good forest are hornbills, barbets, broadbills, fruit-pigeons, muscicapids, bulbuls, white-eyes, laughingthrushes, babblers and flowerpeckers. However, in degraded forest, or the restoration plots being established by FORRU, many of these frugivorous species are absent. Indeed many species, such as hornbills and fruit-pigeons, are unlikely to venture into degraded areas newly planted with young trees. Furthermore, since most large frugivores have become extirpated, we have to look towards other, smaller fruit-eating species, tolerant of degraded areas, to disperse seed. These primarily include bulbuls and mynas, but also jays and magpies; thrushes, robins and chats; white-eyes; laughingthrushes and flowerpeckers. Surprisingly, many of these are insectivores that also take fruit. Replanted areas where the canopy has closed and which are situated close to good forest might support green pigeons, Oriental Pied Hornbill *Anthracoceros albirostris* and possibly wood pigeons.

Role of birdwatchers

Restoration of natural forest ecosystems for wildlife conservation is becoming a very important component of the biodiversity conservation agenda. Recently, an international meeting was held in Chiang Mai, Thailand, to draft a research agenda for the restoration of tropical forests for wildlife conservation in South-East Asia. Two of the areas identified as requiring urgent attention were seed-dispersal and plantation design. One question that immediately springs to mind is "which tree species can attract frugivorous birds from forest into degraded areas?" This can be studied by noting the species and numbers of birds visiting fruiting trees in good forest. Indeed, FORRU has carried out initial studies in this area; one such study was funded by an OBC conservation grant. However, a small research unit such as FORRU does not have the staff or resources to carry out extensive studies. Can you help? On a recent visit to Doi Inthanon, early on a February morning, interesting birds eating fruit in trees included migrant thrushes such as Grey-sided Thrush *Turdus feae* and Eyebrowed Thrush *T. obscurus*, Purple Cochoa *Cochoa purpurea* and Yellow-bellied Flowerpecker *Dicaeum chrysorrheum* along with Wedge-tailed Green Pigeons *Treron sphenura* and several bulbul species. Information on species and numbers of birds and a description of the tree (preferably with a photo), or better still a dried specimen of the leaves and fruits, would be very useful for FORRU's research programme. Observations of birds consuming fruits are made all the time by birders in the region, who may not appreciate their value. Records of birds visiting severely degraded forests or restoration plots (not necessarily to consume fruits) would also be very valuable. Why? Because we need to plant tree species that attract seed-dispersing birds into degraded areas.

All the species depicted on the plate on page 28 are frugivorous and are likely to be important in forest regeneration. Birdwatchers can help enormously in our understanding of these regeneration processes by reporting sightings of birds like these.

1. Horsefield's Babbler *Malacocincla sepiarium tardinatum* (Photo: Christian Artuso)
2. Linneated Barbet *Megalaima lieata hodgsoni* (Photo: Christian Artuso)
3. Pin-tailed Green Pigeon *Treron apicauda* (Photo: John Holmes)
4. Oriental Pied Hornbill *Anthracoceros albirostris* probably the nominate race (Photo: Christian Artuso)
5. Black-and-yellow Broadbill *Eurylaimus ochromalus ochromalus* (Photo: David and John Cooper)

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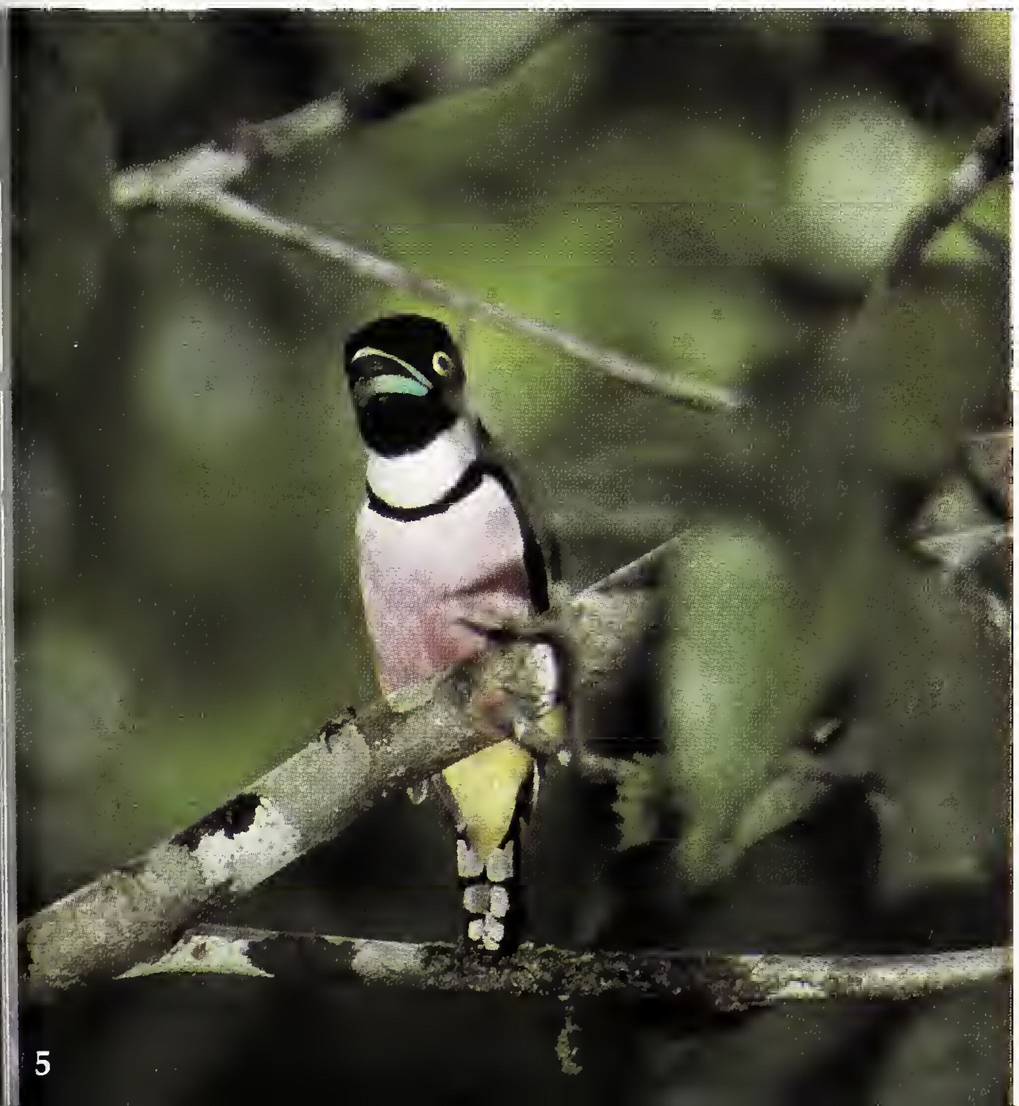
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Stephen Elliott, Forest Restoration Research Unit, Department of Biology, Faculty of Science, Chiang Mai University, Chiang Mai, Thailand

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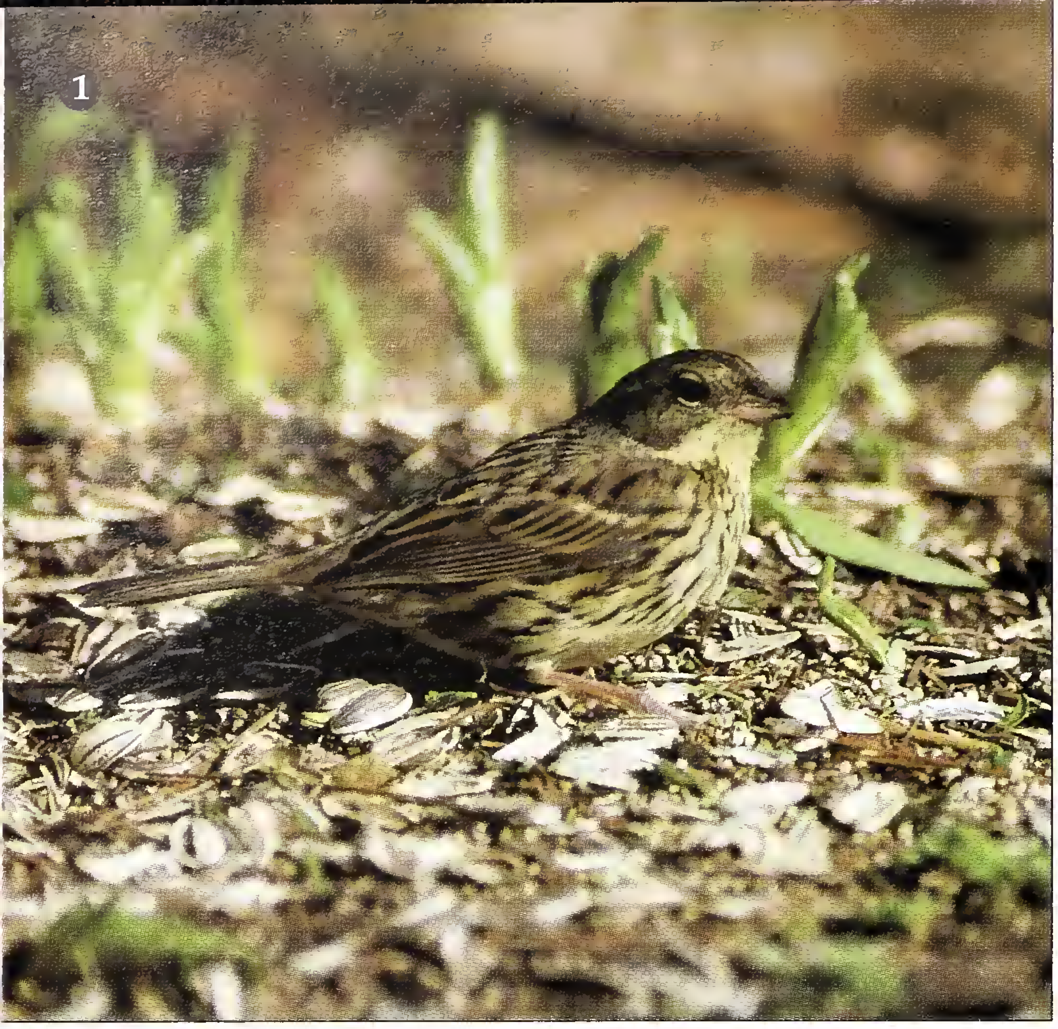
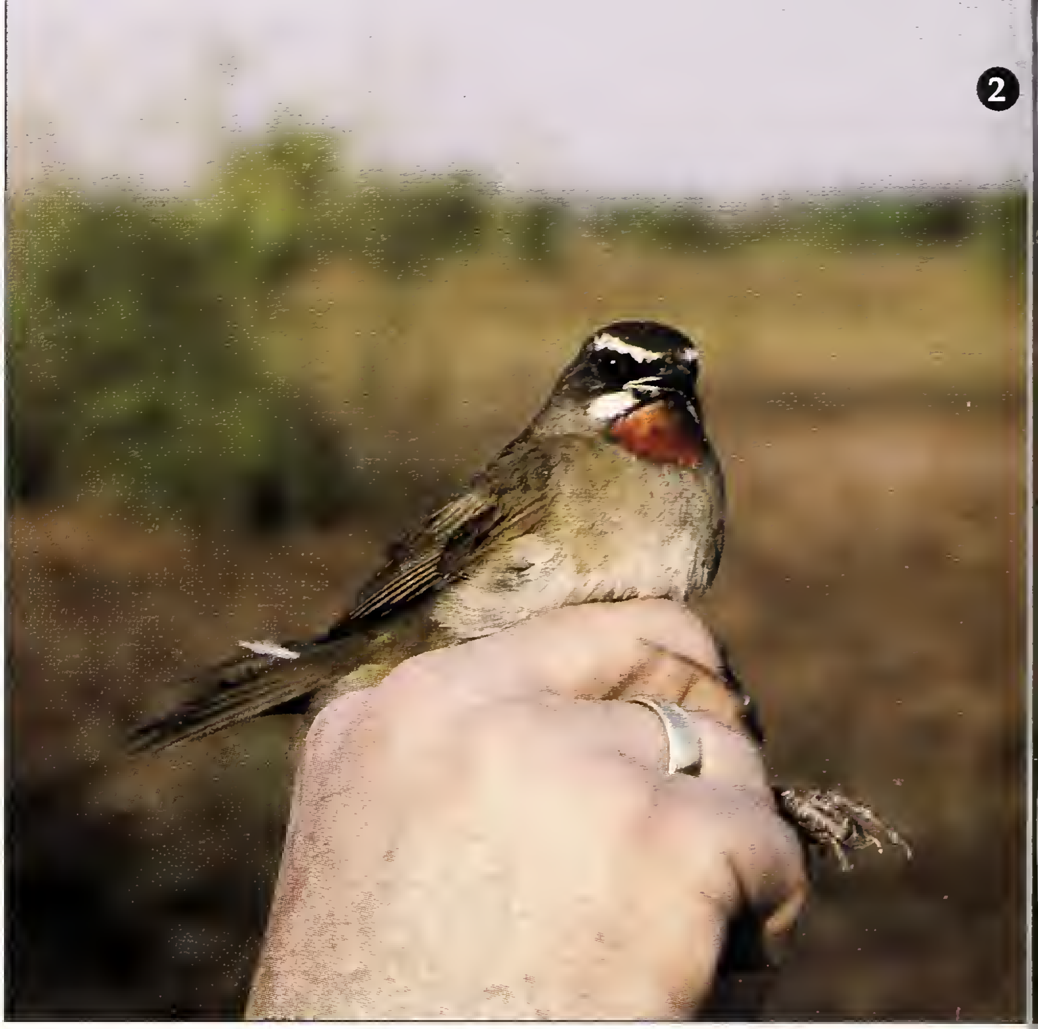
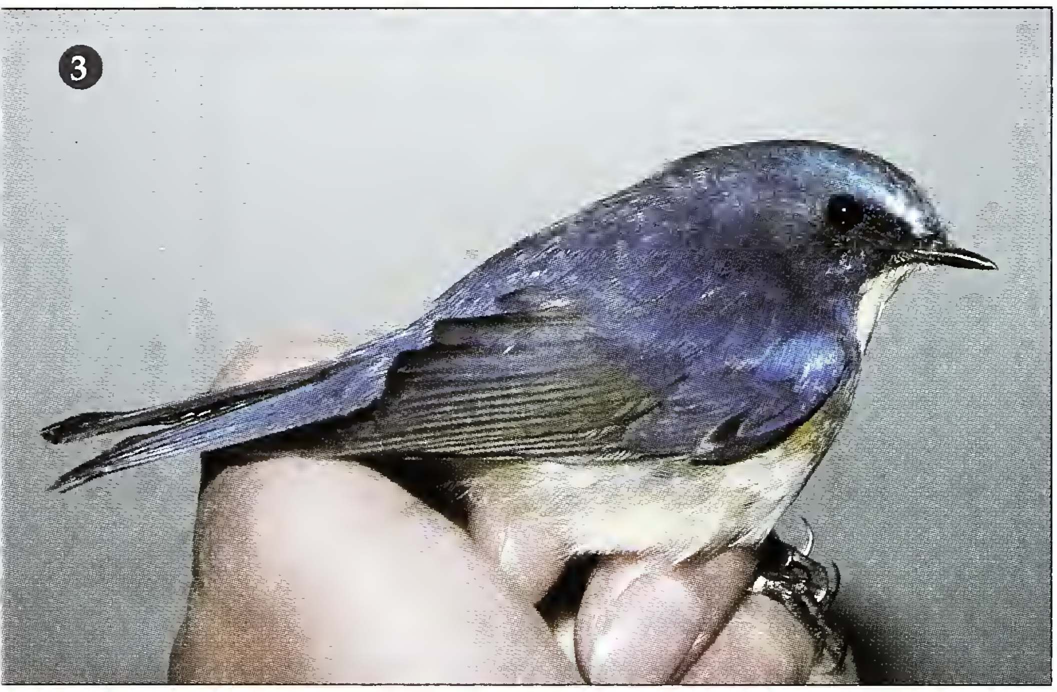
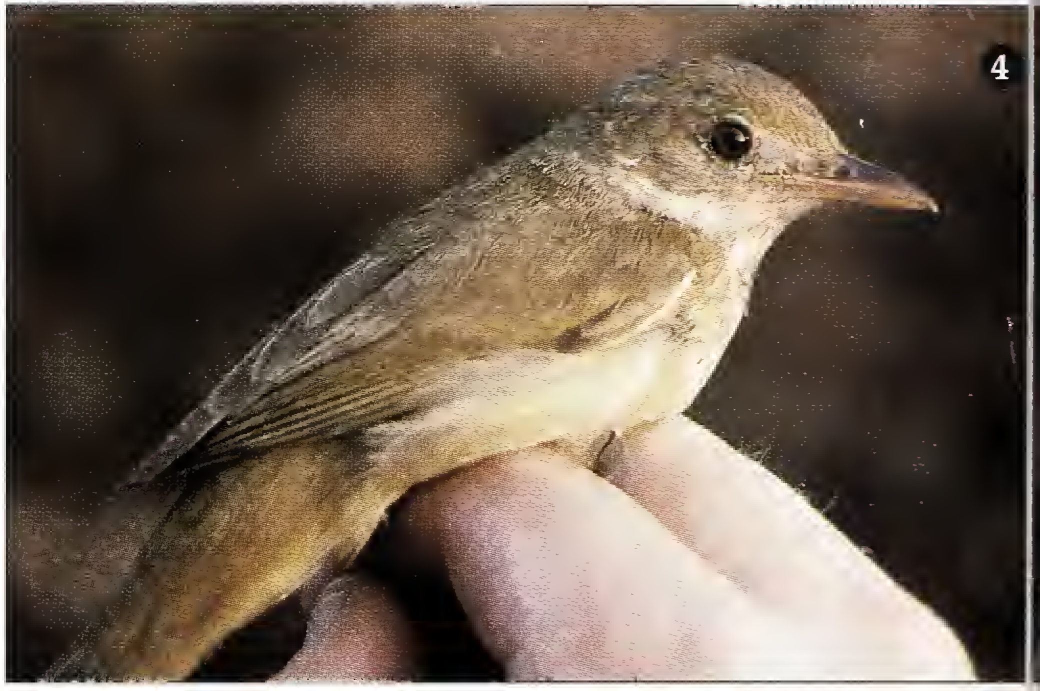
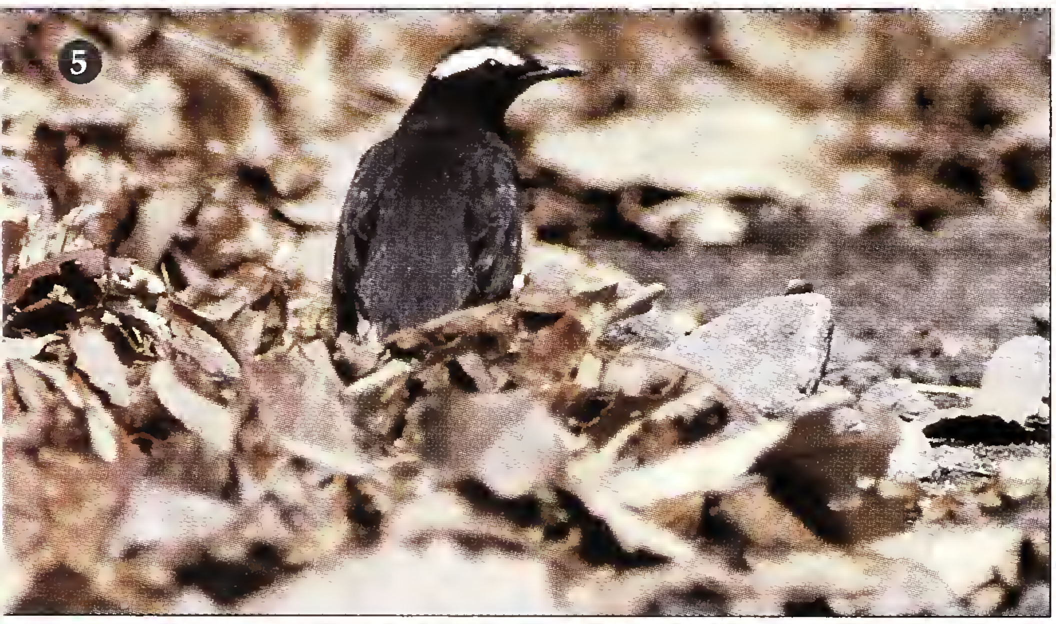
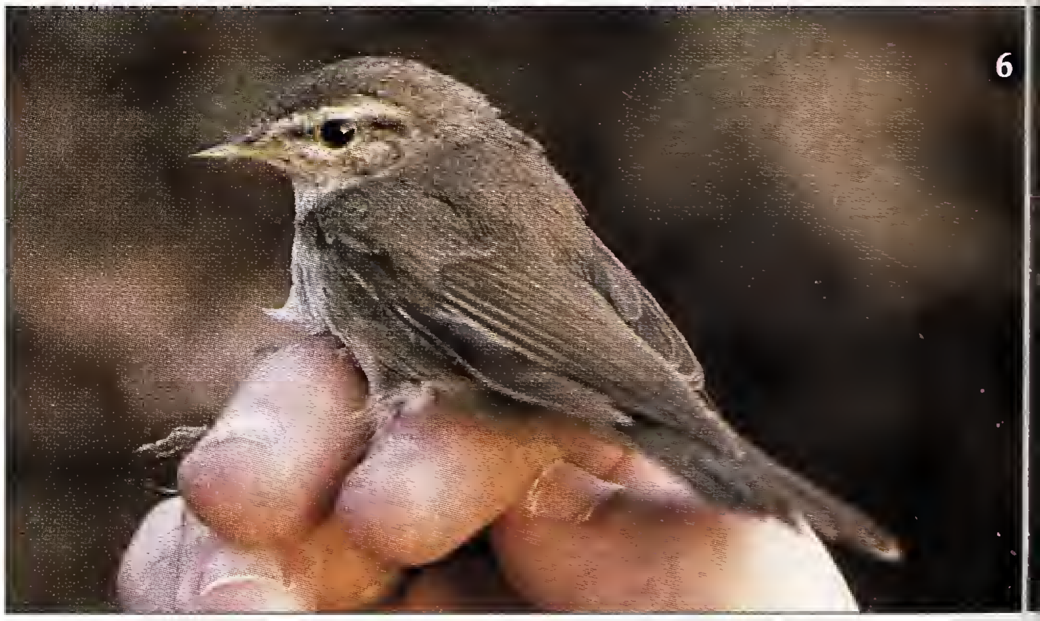


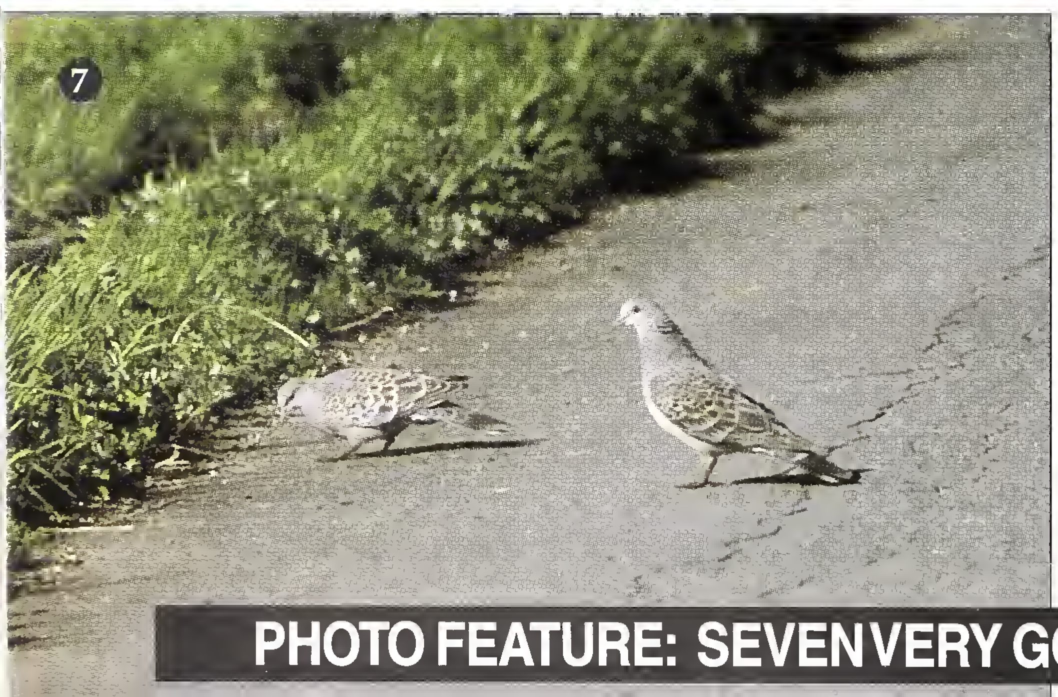












1 Female Black-faced Bunting *Emberiza spodocephala* probably of the race *sordida* (Photo: Takao Baba)

2 Male Siberian Rubythroat *Luscinia calliope* (Photo: David and John Cooper)

3 Male Red-flanked Bluetail *Tarsinger cyanurus* (Photo: David and John Cooper)

4 Thick-billed Warbler *Acrocephalus aedon stegmanni* (Photo: David and John Cooper)

5 Male Siberian Thrush *Zoothera sibirica* (Photo: Takao Baba)

6 Dusky Warbler *Phylloscopus fuscatus* (Photo: David and John Cooper)

7 Oriental Turtle Dove *Streptopelia orientalis* (Photo: Takao Baba)

PHOTO FEATURE: SEVEN VERY GOOD REASONS TO VISIT THAILAND

Thrushes in Thailand

This paper is based on the forthcoming *Thrushes of the World* by Peter Clement and Ren Hathway, published by A & C Black. English names follow those used in that publication.

Introduction

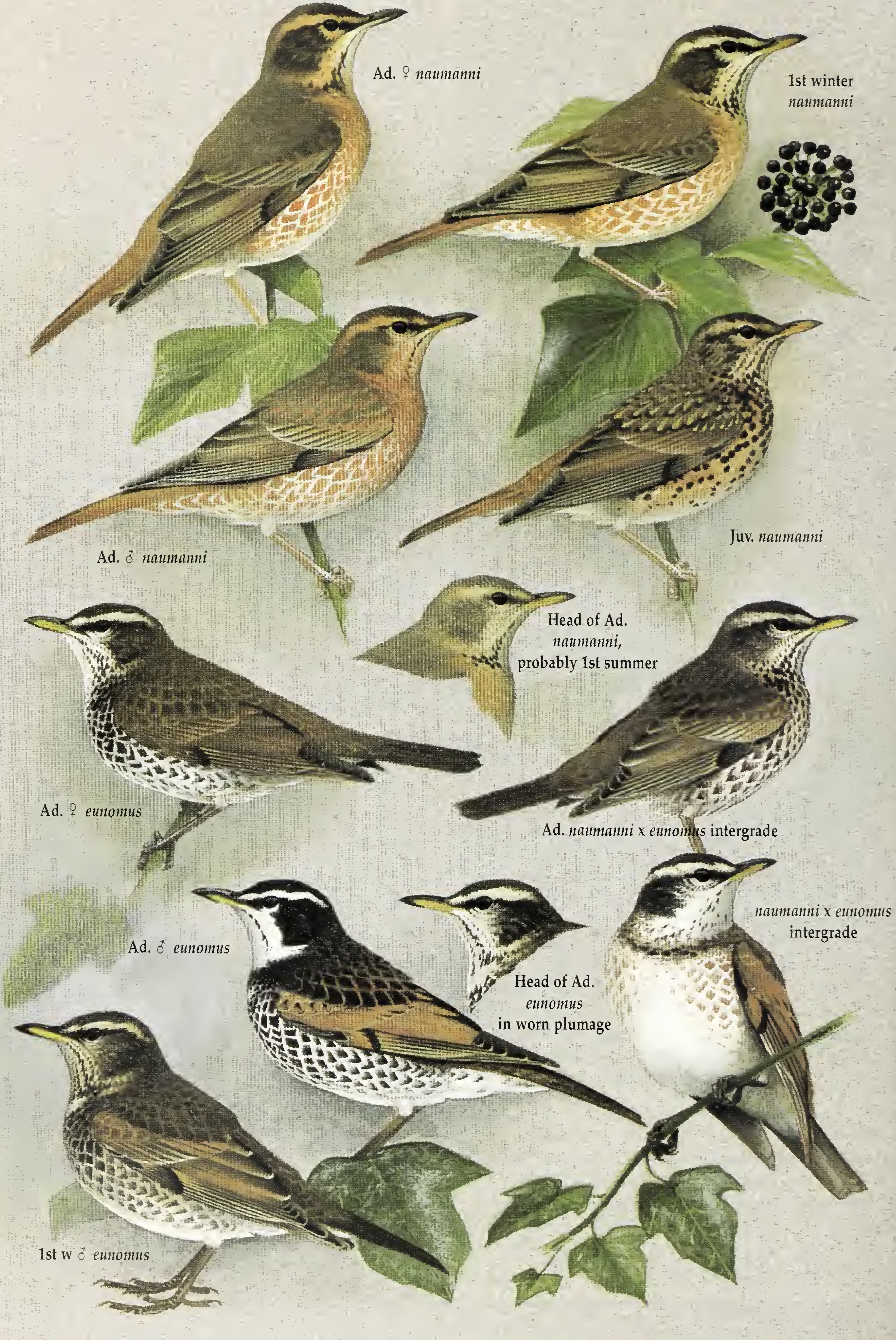
For European birdwatchers, one of the many reasons to go birding in to Thailand has to be the relative ease by which it is possible to see many passerine species (mainly warblers, thrushes and chats) that occur as rare visitors or vagrants to the western Palearctic. These include several thrushes which breed in the extensive taiga forests of eastern Siberia and occur as extremely rare visitors to western Europe (e.g. Eyebrowed *Turdus obscurus* and White's Thrushes *Zoothera dauma*). In addition, there are several species with breeding ranges in China and southern Asia which winter in small numbers in the north of the country (e.g. Chestnut-bellied Rock Thrush *Monticola rufiventris* and Grey-sided Thrush *Turdus feae*). In some years, depending on the severity of the winter, there are additional bonuses when irruptions of certain species occur (mostly into northern parts of the country) and these may include Siberian *Zoothera sibirica*, Dusky *Turdus naumanni* and Chestnut Thrushes *T. rubrocanus*, together with Grey-winged Blackbird *T. boulboul*. Finally, there are the resident thrushes, which include several of the enigmatic and elusive *Zoothera* thrushes: these are particularly challenging because they are skulking species and usually require a degree of patience and persistence to see well (e.g. Dark-sided *Z. marginata* and Chestnut-capped Thrushes *Z. interpres*). This paper, and the plates which accompany it, are taken from the forthcoming handbook on *Thrushes* (Clement & Hathway in prep.)[1] and summarises the best areas to look for, and the identification of, some of the more attractive members of the Turdidae which occur as either residents or winter migrants and include some of the most highly praised (or should that be prized) European vagrants.

Habitats

Although forests in Thailand were once much more extensive, there are several sites which are sufficiently large to support many resident species and attract some of the more erratic winter visitors. Most of these are in the north of the country or along the western border with Myanmar. Thai forests can be divided into several habitat types: from tropical rainforest in the extreme south of the peninsula to evergreen fir forests on the summits of the highest hills (above 1,000 m). In the lowlands there are small remnants of mixed deciduous forest where the canopy is open and allows a ground layer of dense undergrowth to develop, including bamboo and impenetrable thornscrub that is particularly good for skulking species such as White's Thrush and several of the extremely elusive migrant chats. Such areas occur at Huai Kha Khaeng Wildlife Sanctuary.

Also in the lowlands, dry dipterocarp forest occurs on the poorest soils, often in the edges of the foothills, and includes a mixture of pines, grading into other types of evergreen forest at their upper limits. This is relatively species-poor open forest with extensive areas of grass and scrub and usually only supports the common species such as Eyebrowed Thrush, although the streams that flow through them are also good for Blue Whistling Thrushes *Myophonus caeruleus*. Areas of dry dipterocarp are found on the lower slopes of Doi Inthanon (the highest mountain in the country at 2,590 m) and Doi Suthep National Parks and again in Huai Kha Khaeng Wildlife Sanctuary. On the higher slopes and foothills the predominant type is dry evergreen forest, a fairly dense forest with a comparatively closed canopy and characterised by an open forest floor with an abundance of ferns and small tree saplings. These forests are excellent for their diversity of species and include all of the common thrushes together with White's Thrush and Orange-headed Thrush *Zoothera citrina*. Khao Yai National Park and the higher areas of western Thailand are particularly good places for this type of forest. On the higher hills, particularly in the north-west province of Chiang Mai, the evergreen forests are dominated by tall oaks and chestnuts and a dense undergrowth layer.[2] These areas are a Mecca to most resident and visiting ornithologists and continually repay visits, not only because of the variety of species present on a seasonal basis, but also in the day-to-day changes in the avifauna making places like Doi Suthep, its neighbour Doi Pui, and Doi Inthanon such rewarding birding

Dusky/Naumann's Thrush *Turdus naumanni* complex, reproduced with kind permission from A & C Black's forthcoming *Thrushes of the World*


Ad. ♀ naumanni
1st winter naumanni
Ad. ♂ naumanni
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Head of Ad. naumanni, probably 1st summer
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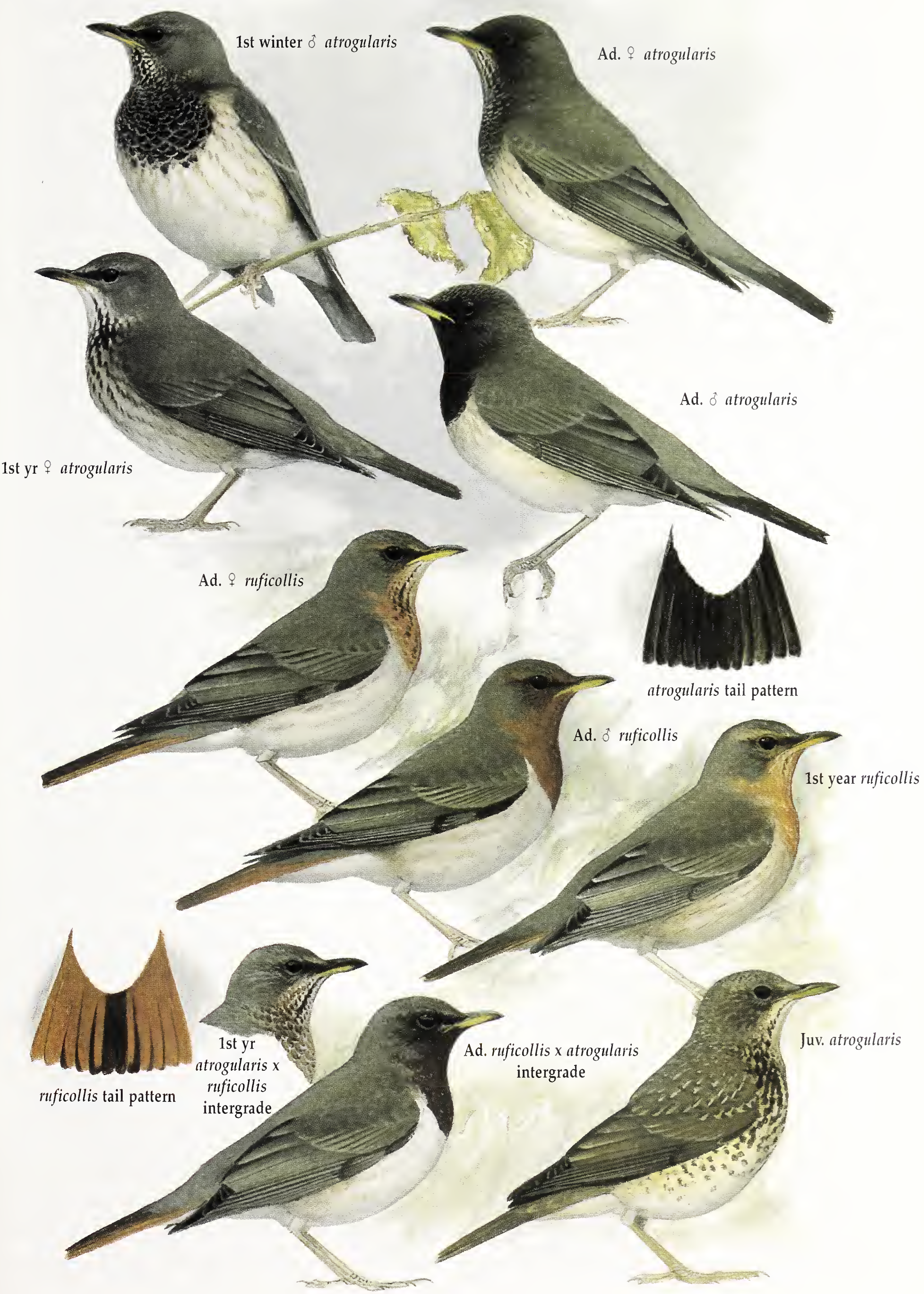

Black-throated Thrush *Turdus ruficollis* complex, reproduced with kind permission from A & C Black's forthcoming *Thrushes of the World*.

1st winter ♂ *atrogularis*
Ad. ♀ *atrogularis*
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ruficollis tail pattern
1st yr *atrogularis* x *ruficollis* intergrade
Ad. *ruficollis* x *atrogularis* intergrade
Juv. *atrogularis*

sites. Other less well-known places that would undoubtedly repay increased coverage are those on the border with Myanmar — Doi Pha Hom Pok (the second highest mountain at 2,296 m) and Doi Ang Khang (1,810 m), although the latter is now largely deforested with only small areas of remnant forest habitat remaining.

The common thrushes

The commonest or most widespread thrushes in Thailand are Blue Whistling Thrush, Blue Rock Thrush *Monticola solitarius* and Eyebrowed Thrush; the first is mainly resident and the latter two are winter visitors.

Blue Whistling Thrush is unmistakable because of its large size, all dark blue plumage with shining or metallic blue tips to many of the head and body feathers and with a large (but not always well seen) patch of metallic blue on the lesser coverts and white or silvery-white tips to the median coverts. It has a habit of flicking its broad, rounded tail nervously. There are five races that occur in Thailand and, although the differences between them are slight, they can be separated in the field. The nominate race *caeruleus* occurs as a winter visitor to northern Thailand (from central China) and is best told by its all-dark bill. The race *eugenei* is a common resident throughout the north of the country and although very similar to *caeruleus* it lacks the silvery-white tips to the median coverts and has a large yellow bill; *temmincki* is a rare or scarce winter visitor to the north and is best told by the prominent patch of deep blue on the forehead running over the eyes and becoming streaks on the crown. The bill is orange or orange-yellow with a dark base and culmen. In the centre and south of the country the race *crassirostris* is resident and is very similar to nominate *caeruleus* but slightly smaller with a stout yellow (not black) bill. In the extreme south (Pattani province, south into Malaysia) the race *dicrorhynchus* occurs; this is the dullest race, mostly blue-black with few metallic blue spots (although it retains the metallic blue patch on the lesser coverts and the silvery tips to the median coverts) and a sooty-black face; the bill is large and mostly yellow with a dark or blackish culmen.

Blue Whistling Thrushes are highly vocal birds and their presence is frequently given away by a sharp piercing whistle (*caeruleus*) or a strident, ringing and far-carrying *tzeet-tze-tze-tzeet* (*eugenei*). The alarm note is a loud, shrill *kreee* or *scree* occasionally continued into *scree-chit-chit-chit*. The song is a thin, slightly undulating whistling warble of several musical notes, e.g. *tew-tew* or *tih-tih* often preceded by a loud, ringing *tzeet-tzeet* and includes several harsh or grating jay-like notes and concludes with a rising *tzeeet-tzuit-tzuit-zuit-zuit* and may follow a lilting pattern; the song of *eugenei* is loud and reminiscent of Black-collared Starling *Sturnus nigricollis*. The song is usually given on the wing or when perched on a rock, crag or from a tree; a softer or subdued subsong is also given, which is rather creaky or jumbled and can continue for up to three minutes. The species often sings in a highly excited or extreme state of agitation whilst pursuing an intruder out of the breeding territory. The song is mostly heard from the end of February (exceptionally from late January) to the end of June and again from mid-August to the end of September; the subsong is more usually heard in September and October.

Blue Rock Thrush occurs in two races, *madoci* which is resident in southern Peninsular Thailand north to at least Krabi and on some of the inshore islands in the Gulf of Thailand, and the more widespread wintering *philippensis*. *Madoci* is very similar but slightly smaller (and with a more noticeably rounded wing-tip) to the nominate race which occurs in Europe, except that males are deeper blue and females are dull, mostly brown, but suffused with blue on the upperparts, while the face, chin and throat are buff or buffish-brown. Male *philippensis* have the head and upperparts and chin to breast violet-blue or bluish-slate, paler or brighter blue on the throat, contrasting greatly with the deep rufous or maroon on the lower breast, belly, flanks, underwing-coverts and undertail-coverts. In fresh (i.e. non-breeding) plumage the head and upperparts are barred with black and have brownish-grey tips, and the red on the underparts is similarly obscured by dark bars and pale tips. Females have grey-brown upperparts, finely barred blackish. The lower nape is often paler and creates a pale collar. The underparts are pale greyish-buff and barred or scalloped with blackish, most prominently on the belly and flanks. First-winter birds have dark underparts but usually show heavy pale spots or speckles on the head, face and most of the underparts.

Blue Rock Thrushes are mostly silent outside of the breeding season but have a sharp and high-pitched whistled *uit-uit* or *veeet-veeet* which is occasionally given as a rapid *vivivi....*; also a varied vocabulary of alarm or distress calls, the most common of which is a deep *tak-tak* or a more Blackbird-like *tchuk* or repeated *tchuk-tchuk*. This may alternate with a high *tsee*, *pee*, *peet* or *peep*.

Eyebrowed Thrushes are instantly recognisable by their grey or greyish-brown head and face and long, broad white supercilium and white chin and crescent on the cheeks, the brown upperparts and (depending on sex or age) pale to warm or rufous-orange underparts. First-winter birds are usually paler on the underparts and the head and face is more like the rest of the upperparts and some (especially those in early winter) may still have pale buffish tips to the greater coverts. This is a relatively common passage migrant and winter visitor throughout the country (though less frequently in the east and south-east), but only becomes numerous from about December onwards. Flocks of these attractive thrushes occur in a wide variety of habitats, including gardens and mangroves, but most are found in the forests of the north and north-west.

The contact note, frequently given in flight, is a Blackbird-like *zieeh* or a harsher *seee* or *tseee* recalling a Redwing *Turdus iliacus*, also a thin *sip-sip*, *zip-zip* or *che-e* given by wintering birds; other contact notes heard from flocks feeding on the ground include a chuckling *dack-dack* or *tuck-tuck* and a *tchup* or *tchuck*, the latter usually given from cover.

Notable residents and visitors

Scarce residents or winter visitors include the two rock thrushes, White-throated *Monticola gularis* and Chestnut-bellied, together with Grey-sided Thrush, Grey-winged Blackbird, Chestnut, Orange-headed, White's, Dark-sided and Chestnut-capped Thrushes.

White-throated Rock Thrush is a long distance migrant from eastern Siberia and northern China and is a sporadic visitor to parts of the north, east and Peninsular Thailand where it occurs in or at the edges of evergreen and deciduous forests. Males are distinctive with a bright cobalt-blue crown to nape contrasting with a black face and rich rufous-orange underparts with a narrow white stripe on the centre of the chin and throat (however, the white on the throat is often difficult to see unless the bird is facing the observer). In autumn and winter, the crown and nape have brownish-black tips and the black on the mantle, back and scapulars has broad pale, golden-buff or light orange-buff tips and broad pale buff tips to the median and greater coverts and tertials. The wings are black with a patch of white at the base of the secondaries; the tail is dark grey with a bluish or greyish-blue base. Females are pale brown, barred darker on the lower back to tail, and heavily scaled or scalloped on the underparts with a poorly defined narrow pale buffish stripe on the centre of the lower throat. Like other rock thrushes, this bird is largely silent outside of the breeding season but may give the occasional soft *tsip* or *tseep* note in flight or as a contact note between paired birds.

Chestnut-bellied Rock Thrush is resident in the forests of the upper slopes of Doi Inthanon and occurs sporadically in winter in other areas of high ground of north-west Thailand, principally the Thanon Thong Chai and Khun Tan ranges. This is a very distinctive species. The males have deep blue upperparts and brighter aquamarine-blue on the rump and uppertail-coverts, a black face and deep rust-orange or maroon underparts. In autumn and winter birds in fresh plumage have pale or greyish-buff tips or fringes to the throat and upper breast and on the mantle and scapulars and pale tips to the black wing-coverts and tertials; the sides of the lower breast can also be blackish-blue.

First-year birds are similar to adults but recognisable by the retained (variable in number) greater coverts. Females are much duller and browner, barred darker on the upperparts with a distinctive face pattern of pale eye-ring and a large pale buff patch at the lower rear edge of the ear-coverts; the underparts are heavily mottled or spotted with pale or yellowish-buff and dark brown. Confusion with several other species is likely, particularly with the slightly smaller and more slender eastern race *philippensis* of Blue Rock Thrush, which lacks the black face and sides of the neck and has duller, more uniform blue upperparts and the blue extends to the breast. Females are also similar to female Siberian Thrushes, but lack a pronounced supercilium and have a well-defined face pattern and large pale buff patch at the rear of the lower ear-coverts. Although this feature can be shown by some female Siberian Thrushes, the whitish supercilium in that species usually extends to the rear of the ear-coverts, where it fades. Female Siberian Thrush also lacks any barring on the upperparts and has dark malar stripes, pale or whitish lower belly to undertail-coverts and, in flight, shows the diagnostic *Zoothera* underwing pattern.

Adult Chestnut-bellied Rock Thrushes have a sharp querulous *quach* contact note and high shrill *sit sit*, *tick* or *stick* notes, often included in a jay-like rasping or croaking *churrr*, *chhrrr* or *chaaaaa* when disturbed; the warning note between adults at the nest is a plaintive *pwee pwee*. The song is a pleasant series of short warbling phrases, usually given from the top of a tall tree and heard from late February to about the middle or end of July. It begins with an ascending or descending note or whistle and a repeated *seee-twiddle-dee-it*, occasionally varied or interspersed with *tewleedee-tweet-tew* or *til-tertew* or similar notes. There is also a subsong, usually given much later in the year, which recalls the bubbling and warbling notes of a Common Starling *Sturnus vulgaris* although it is more broken, with wheezing and grating notes.

Grey-sided Thrush was previously considered to be an uncommon visitor (from a limited distribution in north-east China where it is considered to be threatened by habitat destruction) in small numbers in parts of north-west Thailand, but it is now regarded as an annual visitor in small numbers. It occurs most frequently on Doi Inthanon and Doi Mon Chong and most records are of birds in the company of flocks of Eyebrowed Thrushes. In appearance it is similar to Eyebrowed, with a long white supercilium, but has slightly lighter rufous-brown upperparts and pale grey (not orange or rufous-orange) underparts. First-winter birds are extremely similar to first-winter female Eyebrowed Thrushes and require good views (especially of birds on the forest floor) of the flank colour to separate them; always grey in Grey-sided and pale orange to whitish-orange in Eyebrowed. The call note is similar to that of Eyebrowed but generally a thinner *zeeee* or *sieee*. Like Eyebrowed, this species is not known to sing in Thailand.

Grey-winged Blackbird was previously considered to be a rare winter visitor but is now regarded as an annual visitor in small numbers to parts of the north-west; most records have been from the well-watched areas of Doi Inthanon, Doi Pui and Doi Mon Chong and there are also records (including two males in winter 1999/2000) from Doi Ang Khang. This is a distinctive, almost entirely black thrush with pale grey panels in the wing which are obvious both in flight and at rest. The male is like a European Blackbird *Turdus merula*, including a yellow bill and eye-ring but the greater coverts, secondaries and tertials are pale grey, and the tips to the median coverts are also pale grey or whitish. The adult female is almost entirely olive-brown, tinged with grey, and has the pale wing-panel of the male replaced by warm or rufous-brown and pale tips to the greater coverts forming a wing-bar. Immatures are similar to the female but have the wing-panel less well defined and are streaked with dull or dark buff-brown on the crown to mantle and brownish barring or scales on the breast and belly. The most frequent call notes are a series of fairly typical Blackbird-like chuckles, including *chuck-chuck* variations, given with some emphasis e.g. *chook-chook* as an alarm call, also *churi* used as a contact note.

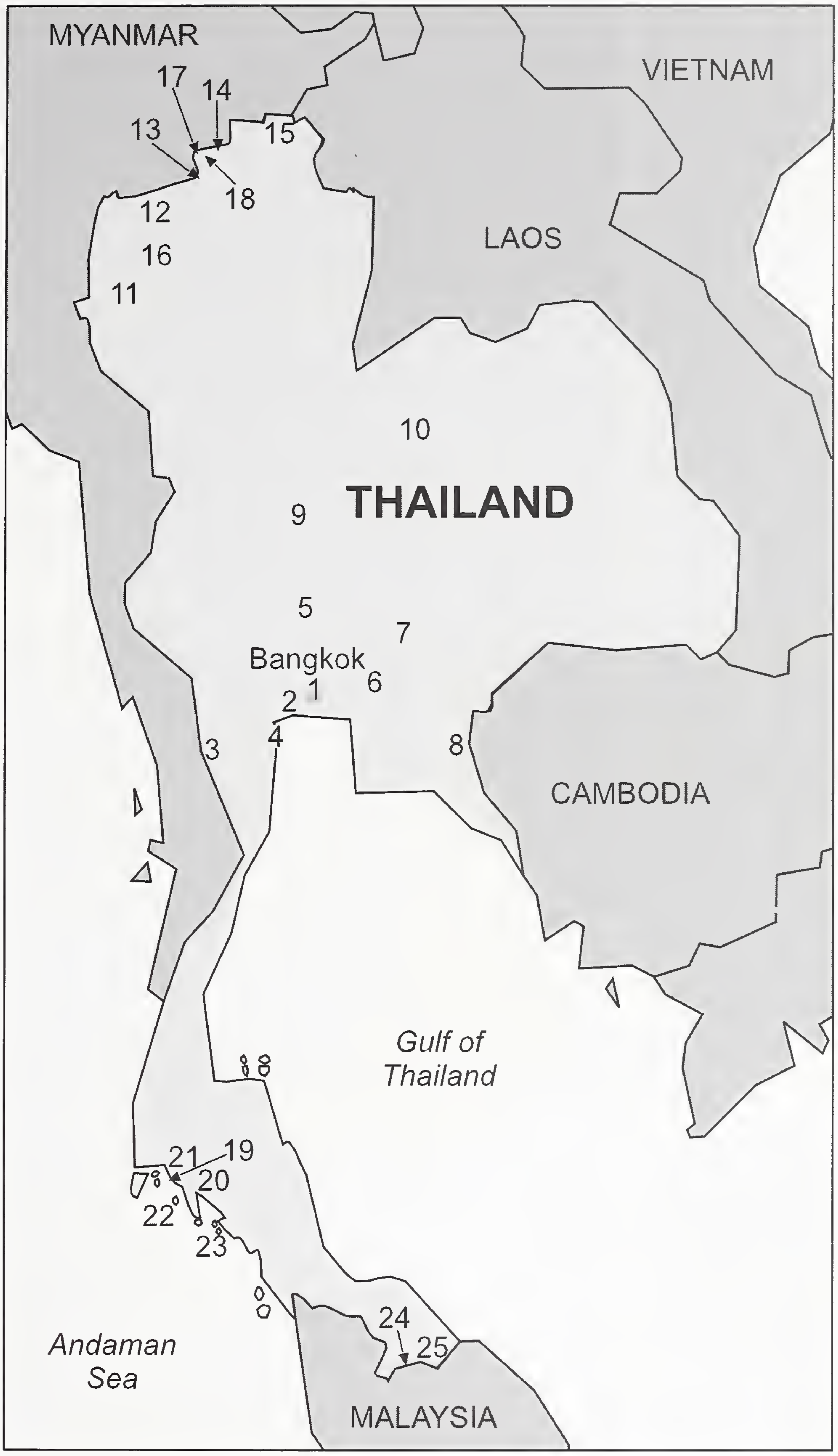
Chestnut Thrush was previously considered to be a rare or irruptive winter visitor to northern Thailand, principally to Doi Pui and Doi Inthanon, but recently it has appeared in at least 10 winters since 1979/80 and 1–2 were present during winter 1999/2000 on the summit of Doi Inthanon with two more males on Doi Ang Khang. The first records for the country were several birds present on Doi Inthanon in January 1980; by March of the same year these had increased to a flock of 35. The following winter there were between three and 15 birds present and in winter 1992/93 up to three were present. All of those identified were of the eastern race *gouldii* which have the head, face and neck dark slate-brown (or blackish-grey when worn), the chestnut on the body (to the underwing coverts) is bright rusty-brown and it lacks white on the belly but may show some on the vent; the undertail coverts are black, broadly white on the centres. The most frequently heard call is similar to the *chuck-chuck* notes of Eurasian Blackbird but the alarm is a rapid and repeated *kwik-kwik kwik-kwik*.

White's Thrush is a large and striking thrush, with long wings and tail and a relatively small head. It is shy and generally elusive and most frequently seen alone on, or disturbed from, forest paths or tracks, where it flies low for a short distance before landing and remaining motionless until the intruder has passed. Both nominate *dauma* (from the Himalayas and southern China) and the Siberian breeding race *aurea* occur. The former is resident in isolated parts of northern Thailand (e.g. Khao Luang and Khao Nok Ram) of Nakhon Si Thammarat and Trang provinces, Peninsular Thailand, whilst the latter is a winter visitor to parts of north-west and north-east Thailand. This is a very distinctive bird; the upperparts are heavily mottled yellowish-olive and paler yellowish with broad or heavy black crescent-shaped tips, the dark crescents continue more prominently or broadly on the white or

Thailand Itinerary

Supplement to
OBC Bulletin 31
June 2000

day	area	notes	birds
1	Lumpini Park (Bangkok)	Park in central Bangkok, an excellent introduction to Oriental birding for first time visitors to the region	Black-capped Kingfisher, Streak-eared Bulbul, Baya Weaver, Vinous-breasted, Black-collared and Asian Pied Starlings, Asian Koel, Plaintive and Banded Bay Cuckoos
2	Samut Sakhon	Coastal area of salt pans south of Bangkok	Brown-headed Gull, Gull-billed, Whiskered and Common Terns, Great Knot, Red-necked and Long-toed Stints, Broad-billed Sandpiper, Spoon-billed Sandpiper, Asian Dowitchers (spring and autumn passage)
3	Kaeng Krachan NP	Motorcycles are not allowed inside this NP. Get permit at HQ. Either a vehicle is needed (to commute daily from HQ) or you must camp inside the forest.	Ferruginous Partridge, White-fronted Scops Owl, Yellow-vented Green Pigeon, Ratchet-tailed Treepie, Grey Peacock Pheasant, Red-bearded Bee-eater, Great Hornbill, Bay Woodpecker, Coral-billed Scimitar Babbler, Spot-necked and White-hooded Babblers
4	Phetchaburi (Ban Laem southwards to Laem Phak Bia)	Great expanse of salt pans and fish ponds extending southwards from Phetchaburi town; foreshore accessible at a few points	Annual(?) assemblage of 100+ Painted Storks, August–September with occasional records of Milky Stork and Spot-billed Pelicans. Good variety of shorebirds on the ponds, including Great Knot (foreshore only); Great Crested and Lesser Crested Terns
5	Suphanburi-Ayuthaya	Large expanse of rice-paddies with marshy patches. Hard to pinpoint precise sites, but needs to be worked with vehicle.	Eastern Marsh and Pied Harriers, Grey-headed Lapwing, Black-headed Ibis, Asian Openbill, egrets
6		Return through Bangkok	
7	Wat Tampraprotisaat		Limestone Wren Babbler (local race), Racket-tailed Treepie, Blue-winged Pitta
8–11	Khao Yai NP	Bungalow accommodation and camping available inside park. Lodges at park entrance. Own transport is advisable but not necessary. Avoid holiday periods and weekends.	Siamese Fireback, Abbott's Babbler, Heart-spotted Woodpecker, Puff-throated Bulbul, Thick-billed Green Pigeon, Great, Oriental Pied, Brown and Wreathed Hornbills, Orange-breasted and Red-headed Trogons, Bar-backed Partridge, Coral-billed Ground Cuckoo, Banded, Dusky, Silver-breasted and Long-tailed Broadbills, Blue and Eared Pittas, Large and White-browed Scimitar Babblers, Golden-crested Myna, White-crowned Forktail
12–14	Khao Soi Dao	Obtain prior permission to visit this WLS at Wildlife Conservation Division, Royal Forest Department, Bangkok	Siamese Partridge, Blue-rumped Pitta, Golden-crested Myna, Indochinese Green Magpie, Dark-sided Thrush, Siamese Fireback, Coral-billed Ground Cuckoo, Black-browed Fulvetta
14	Bung Boraphet	Take a boat from the non-hunting area HQ on the southern lake shore	Cotton Pygmy-goose, Baer's and Ferruginous Pochards, Pheasant-tailed Jacana, Purple Swamphen
15–17	Nam Nao NP	Bungalow accommodation and campground at national park headquarters	Bar-backed Partridge, Silver Pheasant, White-bellied Woodpecker, Blue Pitta, Pin-tailed Parrotfinch, Red-billed Scimitar Babbler, White-hooded Babbler, Indochinese Cuckooshrike, Buff-breasted Babbler, Brown-cheeked Fulvetta, Sultan Tit, Silver-breasted Broadbill, Brown Hornbill
18		Return to Bangkok or continue north-west to Chiang Mai	



Central & south-east Thailand

1 Lumpini Park (Bangkok)
2 Samut Sakhon
3 Kaeng Krachan NP
4 Phetchaburi (Ban Laem southwards to Laem Phak Bia)
5 Suphanburi-Ayuthaya
6 Wat Tampraprotisaat
7 Khao Yai NP
8 Khao Soi Dao
9 Bung Boraphet
10 Nam Nao NP

North-west Thailand

11 Doi Inthanon
12 Doi Chiang Dao
13 Doi Ang Khang
14 Thaton
15 Chiang Saen
16 Doi Suthep
17 Doi Pha Hom Pok
18 Fang Hot Springs

South Thailand

19 Krabi
20 Khao Nor Chuchi
21 Ban Nai Chong
22 Ko Phi Phi
23 Mu Ko Libong
24 Hala Bala Wildlife Sanctuary
25 Phru To Daeng (Chalerm Prakiat Wildlife Sanctuary)

Thailand Showcase Special
(captions to photos on page 4 and 5)

1 Chestnut-eared Bunting *Emberiza fucata* (Photo: Takao Baba)
2 Green Peafowl *Pavo muticus* (Photo: Smith Sutibut)
3 Jerdon's Bushchat *Saxicola jerdoni* (Photo: Jon Hornbuckle)
4 Red-legged Crake *Porzana fasciata* (Photo: Christian Artuso)
5 Male Black-naped Monarch *Hypothymis azurea* (Photo: Christian Artuso)
6 Asian Dowitcher *Limnodromus semipalmatus* (Photo: Ray Tipper)
7 Large Hawk Cuckoo *Cuculus sparveroides* (Photo: Christian Artuso)
8 Female Banded Kingfisher *Lacedo pulchella* (Photo: David and John Cooper)
9 White-crested Laughingthrush *Garrulax leucolophus* (Photo: Christian Artuso)
10 White-browed Piculet *Sasia ochracea* (Photo: Jon Hornbuckle)
11 Male Eared Pitta *Pitta phayrei* (Photo: David and John Cooper)
12 Male Laced Woodpecker *Picus vittatus* (Photo: Christian Artuso)
13 Masked Finfoot *Heliopais personata* (Photo: David and John Cooper)

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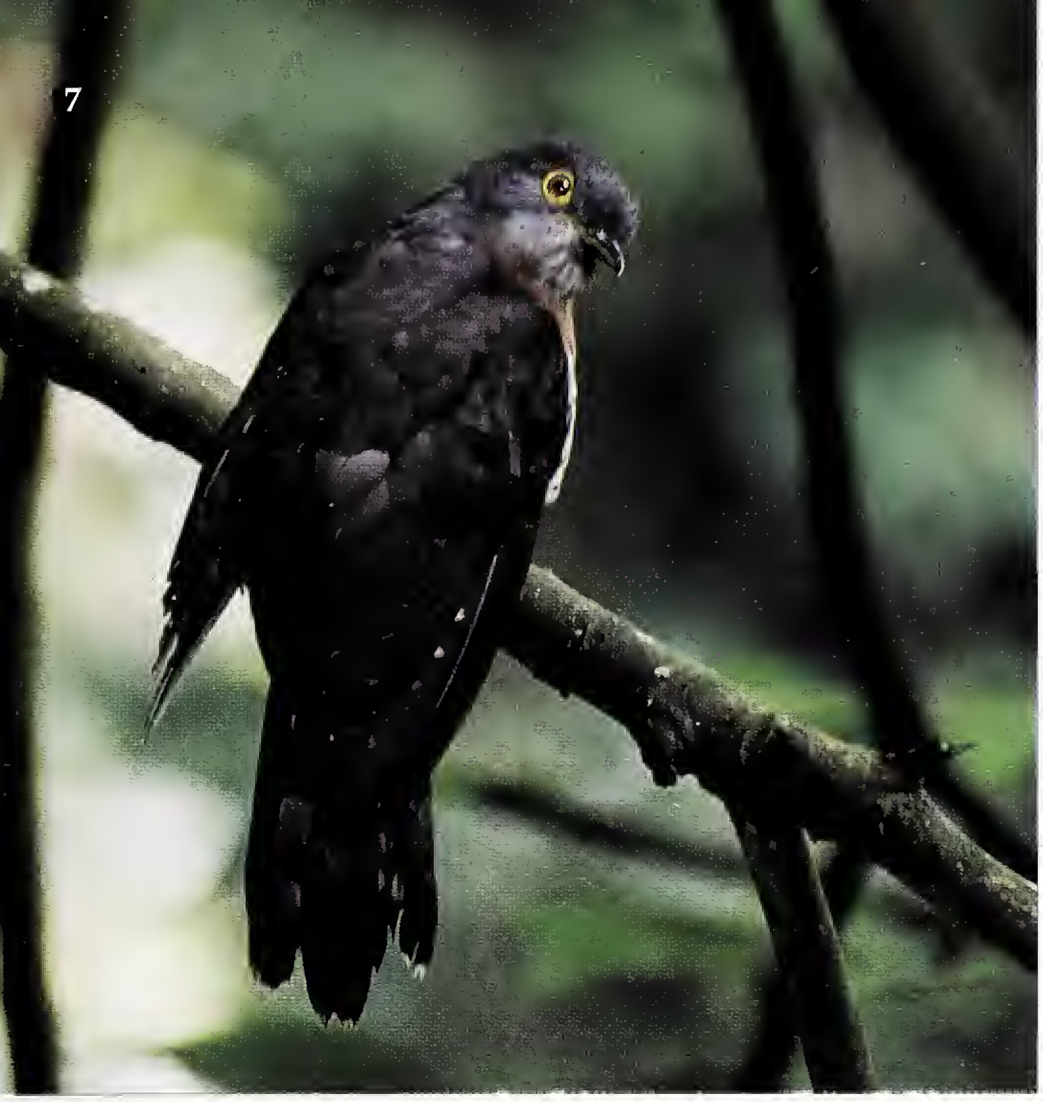
Thailand Showcase Special

(Captions on page 3)

7



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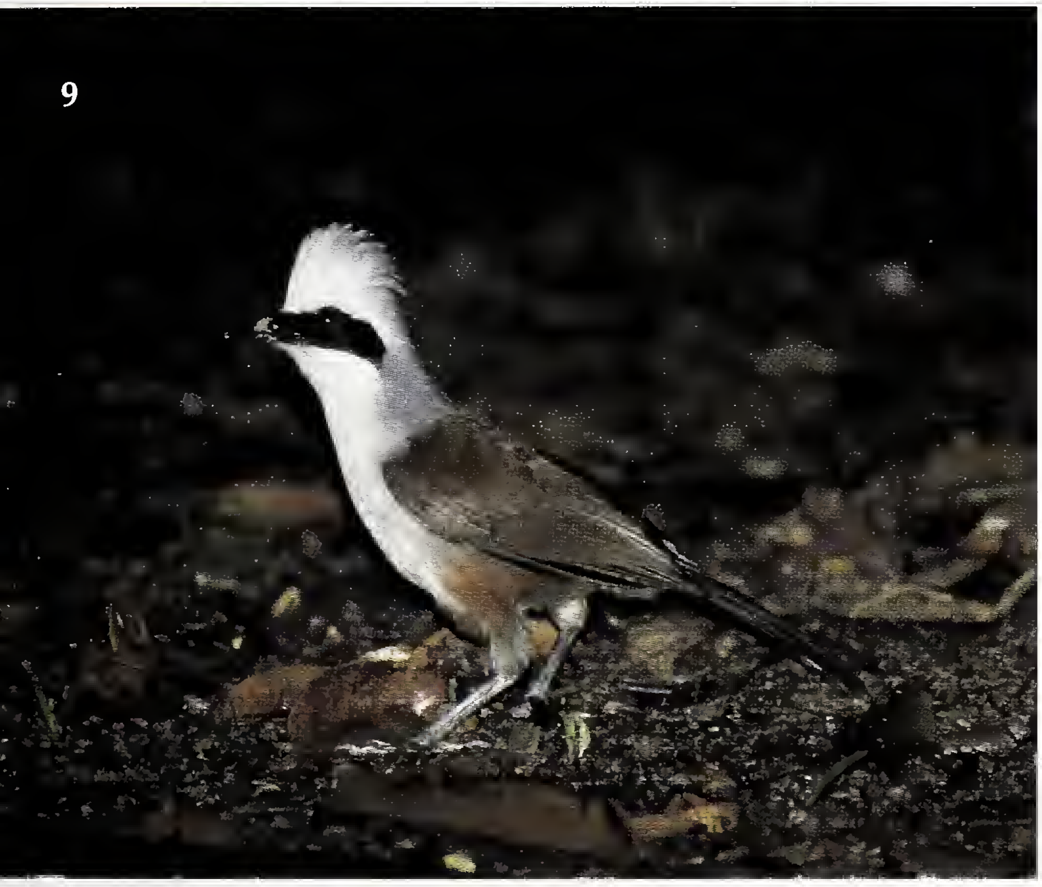

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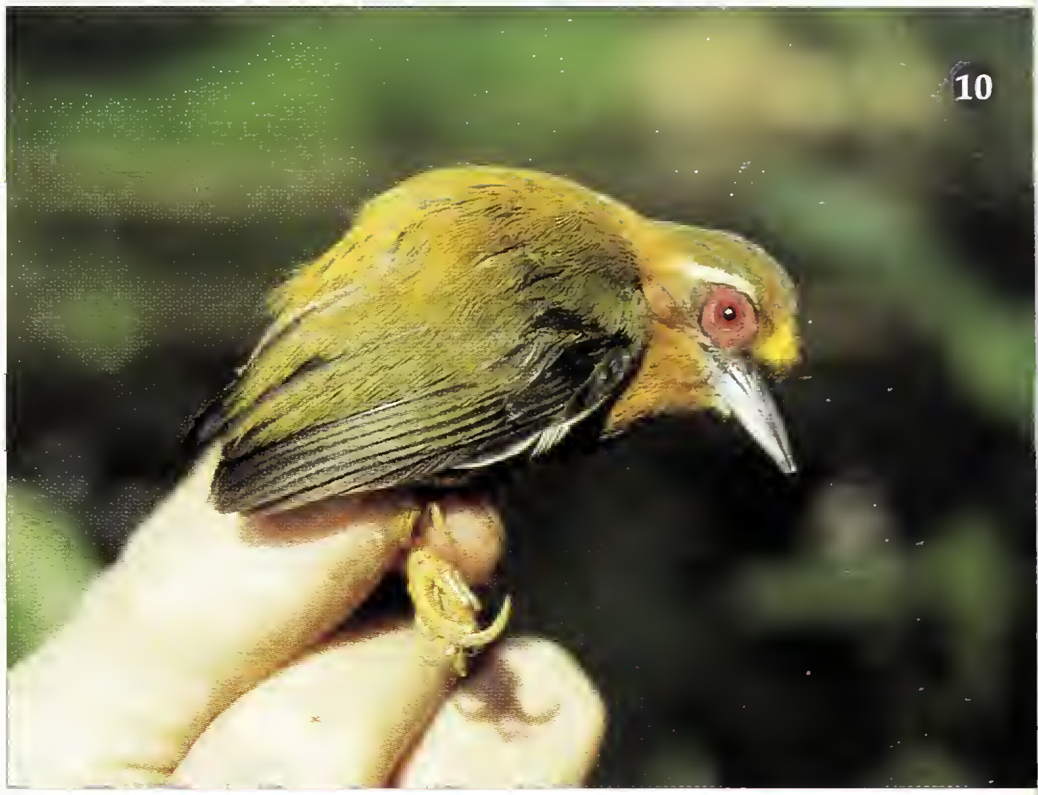

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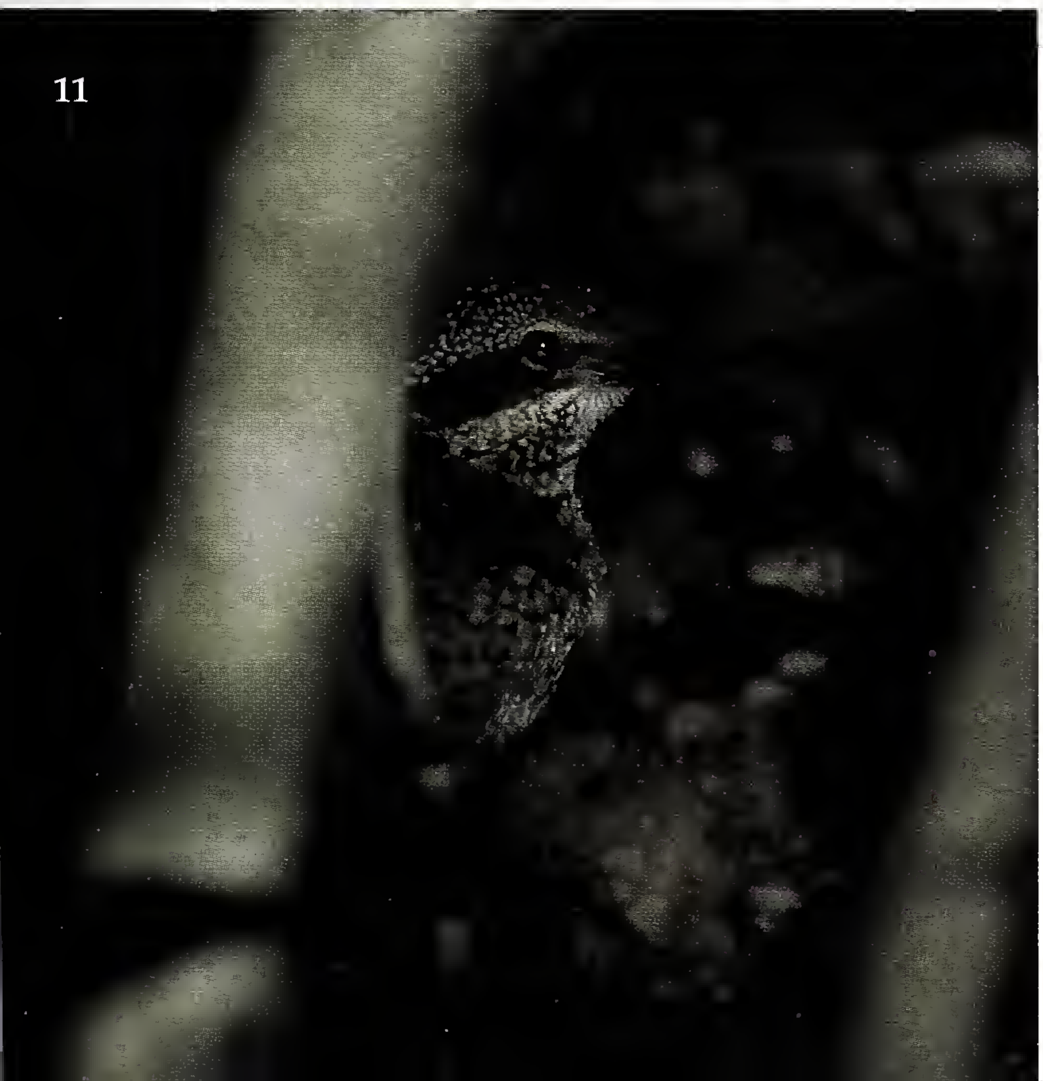

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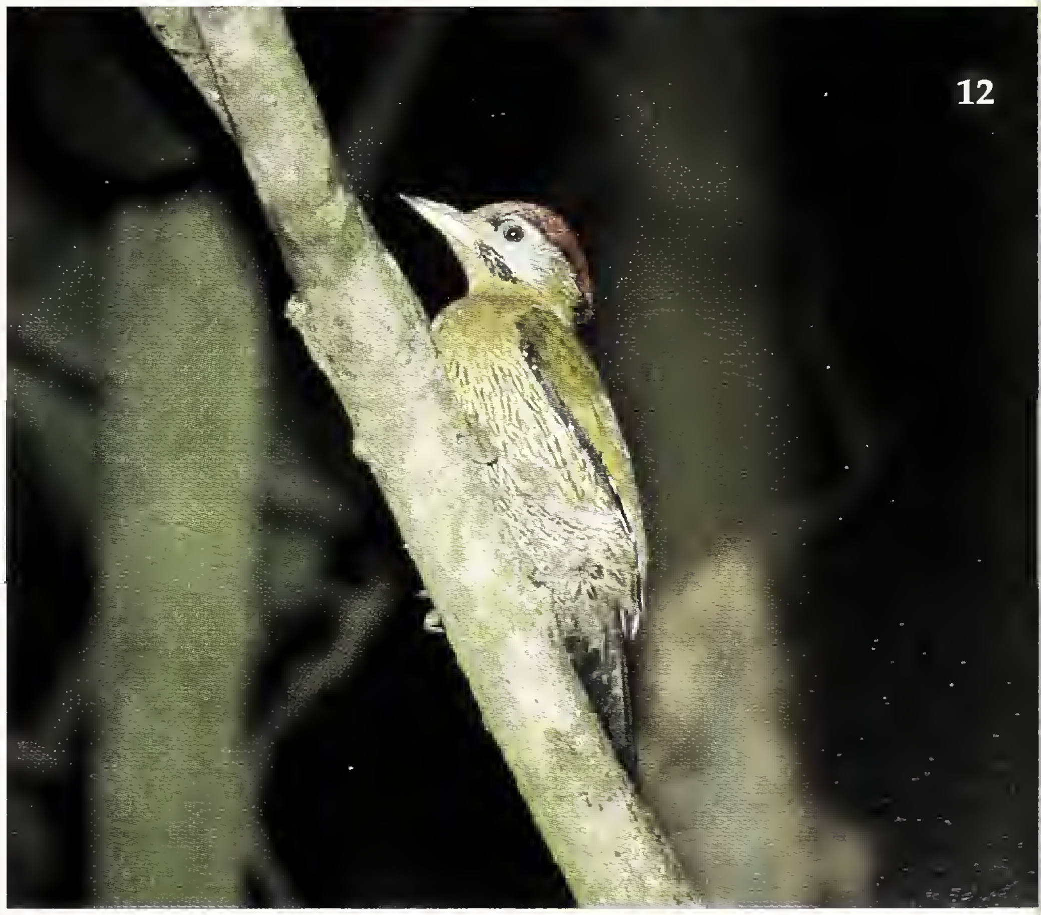

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North-west Thailand — Fly or take overnight bus to Chiang Mai, where there is plenty of accommodation of all levels. Hire a 4WD Suzuki or Motorcycle here.

day	area	notes	birds
1	Doi Inthanon	Highest mountain in Thailand. Bungalow accommodation at park HQ. Birding log books kept at Mr Daeng's cafe.	Summit area: Rufous-throated Partridge, Ashy and Speckled Wood Pigeons (wintering), White-browed Shortwing, Dark-sided Thrush, Ashy-throated Warbler, Chestnut-tailed Minla, Green-tailed Sunbird. Winter: many thrushes including Eyebrowed, Grey-sided, Dusky and Black-breasted; Yellow-bellied Flowerpecker
2		This zone (1,500–1,700 m) has overall the highest bird diversity	Km37 and road to Mae Jaem: Asian Emerald Cuckoo, White-bellied Green Pigeon, Chestnut-crowned and White-necked Laughingthrushes, Rusty-naped Pitta, Large Niltava, Lesser Shortwing, Eyebrowed Wren Babbler, Spectacled Barwing, Slaty-bellied and Chestnut-headed Tesias, White-headed and Black Bulbul, Mountain and Collared Scops Owls, Bay Woodpecker, Green and Purple Cochoas
3		HQ bungalow area	Chestnut and other buntings, Yellow-streaked, Radde's and Pale-footed Warblers, Common Rosefinch (local subspecies), Black-tailed Crake, White-tailed Robin, Scaly Thrush
4		Return to Chiang Mai then head north	Km 13: Rufous-winged Buzzard, White-rumped Falcon, Black-headed Woodpecker, White-bellied Woodpecker
5–7	Doi Chiang Dao	Obtain permission to visit this Wildlife Sanctuary in Chiang Dao. Den Ya Khat Substation (1,400–1,500 m). Open forest (oak/pines)	Chinese Francolin, Mountain Bamboo Partridge, Mrs Hume's Pheasant, Burmese Shrike, Giant Nuthatch, Green Cochoa, White-browed Shrike Babbler, Slender-billed Oriole, Hill Prinia, Chestnut-bellied Rock Thrush, Sapphire and Ultramarine Flycatchers
		Tham Pha Phlong gulley and other areas around wildlife sanctuary HQ at base of mountain	Pin-tailed and White-bellied Green Pigeons, Rusty-naped Pitta, Green Cochoa, Greater Necklaced Laughingthrush, White-hooded Babbler, Streaked Wren Babbler, breeding *siamensis* Asian Brown Flycatcher
8–10	Doi Ang Khang	Accommodation available in small bungalows. Camping also possible and safe in certain areas.	White-browed, Black-throated and Spot-breasted Laughing-thrushes, Lesser Rufous-headed, Grey-headed and Spot-breasted Parrotbills, Russet Bush Warbler, Mountain Bamboo Partridge, Mrs Hume's Pheasant, Crimson-breasted Woodpecker, Red-faced Liocichla, Buff-throated Warbler, Crested Finchbill
11	Thaton	Paddies on Myanmar border by river	Harriers, Jerdon's Bushchat, Chestnut-capped and Yellow-eyed Babblers, Striated Grassbird, Thick-billed, Dusky, Lanceolated and Yellow-streaked Warblers, Siberian Rubythroat, Chestnut-eared, Yellow-breasted, Crested and Chestnut Buntings
12	Chiang Saen	Cover Nong Bong Khai (Chiang Saen Lake) and riverine sand-bars etc along the Mekong River north of town; also reedbeds on town outskirts and scrubby foothills	Falcated and Spot-billed Ducks, Ruddy Shelduck, Baer's and Ferruginous Pochards, Small Pratincole, River Lapwing, White-tailed Rubythroat (in wet reedbeds: very difficult), Manchurian and Chinese Bush Warblers
13	Doi Suthep	High altitude forest	Wedge-tailed Green Pigeon, Hodgson's Frogmouth, Rusty-naped Pitta, Fire-capped Tit, Chestnut-fronted Shrike Babbler, White-bellied Redstart, Purple and Green Cochoas
14	Doi Pha Hom Pok	Similar array of species to Doi Ang Khang, but better moist forest	Crimson-breasted Woodpecker, Cutia, Red-tailed and Spot-breasted Laughingthrushes, Lesser Rufous-headed Parrotbill, wintering thrushes, Beautiful Nuthatch (one record), Blue-fronted Robin (one record)
	Fang Hot Springs	Short (30 min) drive W of Fang	Brown Dipper, White-capped Water Redstart, Plumbeous Water Redstart, Thick-billed Flowerpecker, Spot-winged Grosbeak (when trees are fruiting)
15		Return to Bangkok or head east to Nam Nao	

Southern Thailand — Overnight bus or fly direct to Krabi

day	area	notes	birds
1	Krabi	Accommodation readily available in this growing town	
2	Am/pm	Visit mangroves by boat according to the tides: arrange this at the Chan Pen restaurant. Also wooded areas around shrimp ponds.	Mangrove Pitta, Brown-winged, Stork-billed, Ruddy, Black-capped and Blue-eared Kingfishers, Masked Finfoot, Olive-winged Bulbul, Golden-bellied Gerygone, Black-nest and Edible-nest Swiftlets, Mangrove Blue Flycatcher, White-chested Babbler
3	Pm/am	Visit mangrove areas on north side of town, and beach areas to west of town	As above and waders sometimes including Chinese Egret, Nordmann's Greenshank
4–7	Khao Nor Chuchi	Basic accommodation available. Staying here helps support conservation in the area.	Gurney's, Banded, Hooded and Blue-winged Pittas, Ferruginous, Moustached, Chestnut-crowned, Chestnut-winged, Chestnut-rumped, Short-tailed Babblers, Large and Striped Wren Babblers, Siberian Blue Robin, Black Magpie, Crested Jay, Banded, Dusky, Black-and-yellow and Green Broadbills, Asian Paradise-flycatcher, White-crowned and Bushy-crested Hornbills, Hairy-backed, Stripe-throated, Black-headed, Black-crested and Puff-backed Bulbuls, Drongo Cuckoo, Moustached Hawk Cuckoo, Sunda Scops Owl, Diard's, Orange-breasted and Scarlet-rumped Trogons, Rufous-backed, Rufous-collared and Banded Kingfishers, Gold-whiskered, Red-crowned, Red-throated and Blue-eared Barbets, Bamboo, Buff-rumped and Orange-backed Woodpeckers, Yellow-rumped Flycatcher, Ruby-cheeked, Purple-naped and Brown-throated Sunbirds, Yellow-breasted Flowerpecker (Spot-bellied Eagle Owl, Malaysian Honeyguide)
8–9	Ban Nai Chong	Explore forest fragments in the Krabi area	Buffy Fish Owl, Rail-babbler, Gould's and Javan Frogmouths, Fulvous-chested Flycatcher, Orange-headed Thrush (wintering)
10–11	Ko Phi Phi	Three-hour boat trip from Krabi	Christmas Island, Lesser and Greater Frigatebirds, Pied Imperial Pigeon
12	Mu Ko Libong	One-hour boat trip from Kantang, Trang	Nordmann's Greenshank, Great Knot, Chinese Egret, Great and Lesser Crested Terns
13	Hala Bala Wildlife Sanctuary	Malayan-type rainforest	Helmeted Hornbill, Rhinoceros Hornbill, Garnet Pitta, Rufous-tailed Shama, Spotted Fantail
14	Phru To Daeng (Chalerm Prakiat Wildlife sanctuary)	Peat swamp forest	Lesser Adjutant, Grey-headed Fish Eagle, Malaysian Blue Flycatcher, Rufous-tailed Shama
15		Return to Bangkok, or carry on into Malaysia!	

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whitish underparts and in flight it shows broad and prominent black and white bands across the underwing. Differences between the two races are fine and *aurea* is probably not always separable in the field (particularly in worn plumage) from nominate *dauma*. In the hand there are differences in the wing measurements. On average, *aurea* is slightly larger, and in fresh plumage paler on the face with much finer spots or flecks on the cheeks, ear-coverts and submoustachial stripes; the chin and throat are more extensively white and the bases to the forehead, crown, nape, mantle, back and inner scapular feathers are yellowish to deep or golden yellowish-buff. The tail has 14 feathers (although some western birds may have only 12). The bill is as nominate *dauma* (including the presence of a small hook at the tip), but much stronger and more substantial. The base to the lower mandible is paler or whitish-flesh (and may extend to the cutting edges of the upper mandible) and is more likely to show a dark tip. This, like most *Zoothera* thrushes, is a remarkably silent bird, often reluctant to utter alarm or distress calls but is known to give a soft (often inaudible beyond a few feet) Bullfinch-like whistle as contact between a pair, also a typically *Zoothera*-like and drawn out high-pitched or whispered *seeh*, *seep*, *zieh* or *tzeep* and a shorter and softer *tsi*.

Dark-sided Thrush is an extremely secretive and easily overlooked resident of moist or damp areas in evergreen forests at most elevations, including streams and the boggy hollows on the summits of Doi Inthanon and Doi Suthep and possibly elsewhere in the north and north-west. Usually alone, it spends long periods on the ground motionless in thick vegetation, especially when disturbed.

The upperparts are dark-olive with a rufous panel on the closed wing and a well-marked face pattern with contrasting dark and pale or whitish ear-coverts and broad malars bordering a pale throat. The underparts are heavily or deeply scalloped, often appearing mottled or smudged in the field. First-year birds are slightly browner on the upperparts and have thin or fine dull orange-buff central shafts to the crown, mantle, back and scapulars and tips to the median and greater coverts that are retained into the first year of adult plumage. The tertial tips are pale orange-buff. Confusion with several other thrushes that occur in the region is likely and it is told from the rarer Long-tailed Thrush *Zoothera dixoni* by its long and hook-tipped bill, short tail and lack of wing-bars. The well-marked underparts with deep or heavy scallops on the breast and sides of the belly are also good field characters. White's Thrush is slightly larger with a shorter bill, longer tail and is more heavily mottled or speckled paler or golden-buff above and below with heavy or broad dark or blackish-brown bars, forming scales or scallops above and below. In flight it has a distinctive underwing pattern and white tips to the outer tail feathers. Dark-sided Thrush is mostly silent but has a soft, deep and guttural *chuck* or *tjuk* contact note; the alarm is a high-pitched repeated *pit-pit-pit*. The song is poorly known (and may only be given for very short periods) but has a short (less than a second), unobtrusive and thin downwardlly inflected monotone whistle.

Dark-sided
Thrush
Summit
19 Mar 94
Yod Doi
Inthanon

Dark-sided Thrush *Zoothera marginata* by Kamol Komolphalin

Orange-headed Thrush occurs as two races: *innotata* is resident in evergreen forests (up to about 1,500 m) in north-west Thailand, where it occurs from late May onwards and in winter moves to the east and north-east of the country and south to southern Thailand and Peninsular Malaysia; *gibsonhilli* occurs as a resident in Trang province, southern Thailand, and in winter further south at lower levels along Peninsular Thailand, on several islands in the Gulf of Thailand and discontinuously south to about Selangor, Peninsular Malaysia. Both are extremely similar to nominate *citrina* (from Pakistan to India and Sri Lanka) with rich or deep-orange head and underparts, except for the white undertail-coverts; the rest of the upperparts are leaden bluish-grey with pale or whitish tips to the dark grey tail; females are generally more olive or olive-brown on the upperparts. The principal differences between them are that *gibsonhilli* has a slightly longer and heavier bill and *innotata* lacks white tips to the median coverts. This is another shy, secretive species (but comparatively more easily seen than many other *Zoothera* species) that may congregate in small flocks in the non-breeding season at common sources of food. It spends long periods foraging low down or on the ground in, or under, thick vegetation and bushes and forest undergrowth. It is another species that is largely silent and has a soft *chuk*, *tjuk* or *tchuk* call-note and a loud screeching *teer-teer-teer* or *kreeee...* likened to a pencil scraping on slate. In flight it gives a thin *tsee* or *dzeee*, very similar to several *Turdus* and *Zoothera* thrushes.

Chestnut-capped Thrush occurs as a scarce resident in evergreen forests in southern Thailand. It occurs mostly in trees at mid-height, but also low down or on the ground, skulking under vegetation; occasionally it is seen in fruiting trees but it is quick to take flight once disturbed. Even in areas where the bird is known to be present it can be extremely difficult to see well. Like several other *Zoothera* thrushes it is a shy and retiring species and remains generally little-known.

When seen it is unmistakable; a small thrush with a chestnut head (which often looks dark or brown in the poor light of the forest floor) and grey upperparts with two broad white wing-bars and white lores to eye, black chin to breast and white on the rest of the underparts, spotted with black on the upper belly and flanks. Chestnut-capped Thrushes are mostly silent outside of the breeding season but have a sharp or ringing *turrr-turrrrr* alarm or distress call, females have a harsh *tac* note and a thin, soft but high-pitched and descending *tsi-i-i-i* note, frequently used by adult females when feeding young and similarly given in response by young birds. For those fortunate enough to hear it, the song is a slow, hesitant series of rising and flute-like or liquid whistling phrases *tooeetyu* or *towyeetoo* and interspersed with *soweetoee* and chirrups *see-it-tu-tu-tyuu*. It may also contain rough or grating notes and some high whistled notes, overall recalling the sweet and musical song of White-rumped Shama *Copsychus malabaricus* but higher-pitched. Some singers give only short, hesitant and frequently repeated songs, whilst others have an apparently more varied and continuous repertoire.

Scarce visitors and extreme rarities

The remaining species are mostly the very rare, scarce or erratic visitors: Siberian Thrush, Long-tailed Thrush, Eurasian Blackbird, Black-breasted Thrush *Turdus dissimilis*, Black-throated Thrush *Turdus ruficollis*, Dusky Thrush and Japanese Thrush *Turdus cardis*.

Siberian Thrush adult male needs no introduction. It is almost entirely slaty-black with a long white supercilium, white belly and tips to the corners of the tail; the other main field characters are the distinctive black and white underwing-pattern and the bright yellow legs. Females are olive-brown with a buffish or creamy supercilium, long submoustachial stripe and dark-brown malar. The tail is similar to that of the male with pale whitish or creamy-buff tips at the corners, the median and greater coverts have pale orange-buff tips; the underparts are mottled with paler centres and brownish fringes, and the underwing-coverts are like the male's but duller or buffish and the bases of the flight feathers and central band are dull brown. Immatures are similar to females but first-year males are separable on body colour and may have a reduced amount of white in the supercilium and streaks or spots on the underparts. It occurs most numerously as a passage migrant through Thailand from mid- to late November and early December, and in spring from late March to late April, but also as a scarce wintering bird in western and eastern-central Thailand. The best places to see this species in Thailand are Doi Inthanon, Doi Pui, Doi Pha Hom Pok and Doi Mon Chong in early April.

Long-tailed Thrush is a rare winter visitor to the north-west with records only from Doi Pha Hom Pok, Doi Pui (February 1980, January 1983), Doi Inthanon (January 1982) and Doi Mon Chong (April 1983). It is a shy, secretive and retiring bird which usually occurs in dense forests of fir, oak and rhododendron above or along the treeline, also dwarf juniper forest and high-altitude scrub. The crown and upperparts are olive-brown with two buff or buffish-white wing-bars. The tail is also olive-brown with paler outer tail feathers and a white wedge on the inner web and tip. The face is well-marked with a blackish rear edge to the ear-coverts; the chin and throat are pale yellowish-buff, spotted or barred at the sides and becoming more heavily barred or scalloped on the breast and flanks.

Black-breasted Thrush is a rare but annual winter visitor in small numbers to north-west Thailand, principally from the high-ground areas (between 1,400 m and 1,600 m) of Doi Inthanon, Doi Pui and Doi Pha Hom Pok.[3] A very distinctive species, the male has an all-black head to nape and upper breast, a bright yellow eye-ring, grey upperparts and bright orange or rufous breast and flanks. Females lack the black head to breast and have the head and upperparts brown, the chin and throat is white, the orange on the sides of the breast is heavily streaked blackish, and the centre of the breast to undertail-coverts is white.

Eurasian Blackbird, race *mandarinus*, occurs as a rare visitor to northern Thailand. It is worthy of particular attention since, although it bears close similarity to birds in Europe (it is slightly larger with a longer primary projection and noticeably broader wings and a heavy undulating flight), it is now (together with races in China and the Himalayas) regarded as a potential or incipient species, Eastern Blackbird *T. mandarinus*. More importantly, although there have only been three records, the species may be showing signs of extending its range from southern China into northern Thailand. A male has been present for about two years in the lowland area around Chiang Mai and last year a female was seen around the lower levels of Doi Inthanon.

Black-throated Thrush occurs as two races, *ruficollis* and *atrogularis*. Both are extremely rare winter visitors to Doi Inthanon (the only locality where *ruficollis* has been recorded; *atrogularis* has also occurred on Doi Pui[3]) and usually only in years when there have been irruptions of other species into northern Thailand. First recorded in January 1982 (*ruficollis*) and February 1982 (*atrogularis*), the only record since then has been of 1–2 *atrogularis* and 4–5 *ruficollis* in the radar station compound at the summit of Doi Inthanon in winter 1999/2000. Adult males (and some females) of either race are unmistakable with either red or black on the face to breast and on the tail feathers. However, females and immatures may be more problematic. It is also possible that intermediates between the two could occur. First-winter plumage is similar to adult female but has broad pale buff or greyish edges to the greater coverts, scapulars and tertials. The retained juvenile outer (occasionally all) greater coverts have whitish tips. The red or black on the face and throat to the sides of the neck can be variably streaked or, in *ruficollis*, these feathers may be off-whitish or pale orange, spotted or streaked darker reddish (with or without darker spotting on the malar), becoming deeper or darker orange on the tips of the breast and forming an incomplete or slightly mottled pectoral band (first-year males have a more extensive area of rufous than the same-age females). The tail is as the respective adult (although first-year *ruficollis* tend to show more extensive darker outer webs to the outer tail feathers, except for the outermost pair). The complete throat- and breast-band of the adult is acquired during the late winter/early spring of the first-summer plumage. First-winter females are similar to adult females with streaked lower throat and breast but *ruficollis* can also lack any red or orange on the throat and breast; in this plumage they are similar to the same-age *atrogularis* and have a pale buffish supercilium, off-white to pale buffish chin and throat and black streaks on the sides of the chin and malar stripe. The upper breast is spotted blackish to warm brown on a greyish ground colour with spots on the centre and lower breast becoming warmer or even rufous-brown. The wings and tail are like a first-winter male. Intermediate birds (of any age) are predominately like the same-age *atrogularis* but with varying amounts of red to reddish-black on the chin to breast and in the tail.

Dusky Thrushes in Thailand have mainly been recorded from Doi Inthanon and have so far all been of the northerly breeding race *eunomus*. This is another rare or scarce winter visitor which occurs erratically only in irruption years. First

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Captions for plate on pages 38 and 39

1. Blue Whistling Thrush *Myophonus caeruleus eugenei* (Photo: Christian Artuso)
2. Blue Rock Thrush *Monticola solitarius* probably of the race *madoci* (Photo: Christian Artuso)
3. Eyebrowed Thrush *Turdus obscurus* (Photo: Jon Hornbuckle)
4. Grey-winged Blackbird *Turdus boulboul*, Doi Inthanon, winter 1999-2000 (Photo: Chitapong Kuawong)
5. Chestnut Thrush *Turdus rubrocanus*, Doi Inthanon, winter 1999-2000 (Photo: Chitapong Kuawong)
6. Dark-sided Thrush *Zoothera marginata* (Photo: Jon Hornbuckle)
7. Female Siberian Thrush *Zoothera sibirica sibirica* (Photo: Christian Artuso)
8. Orange-headed Thrush *Zoothera citrina*, a captive bird in a Hong Kong aviary (Photo: Ray Tipper)
9. Black-breasted Thrush *Turdus dissimilis*, Doi Inthanon, winter 1999-2000 (Photo: Chitapong Kuawong)
10. Dusky Thrush *Turdus naumanni eunomus*, Doi Inthanion, winter 1999-2000 (Photo: Chitapong Kuawong)
11. Black-throated Thrush *Turdus ruficollis ruficollis*, Doi Inthanon, winter 1999-2000 (Photo: Chitapong Kuawong)

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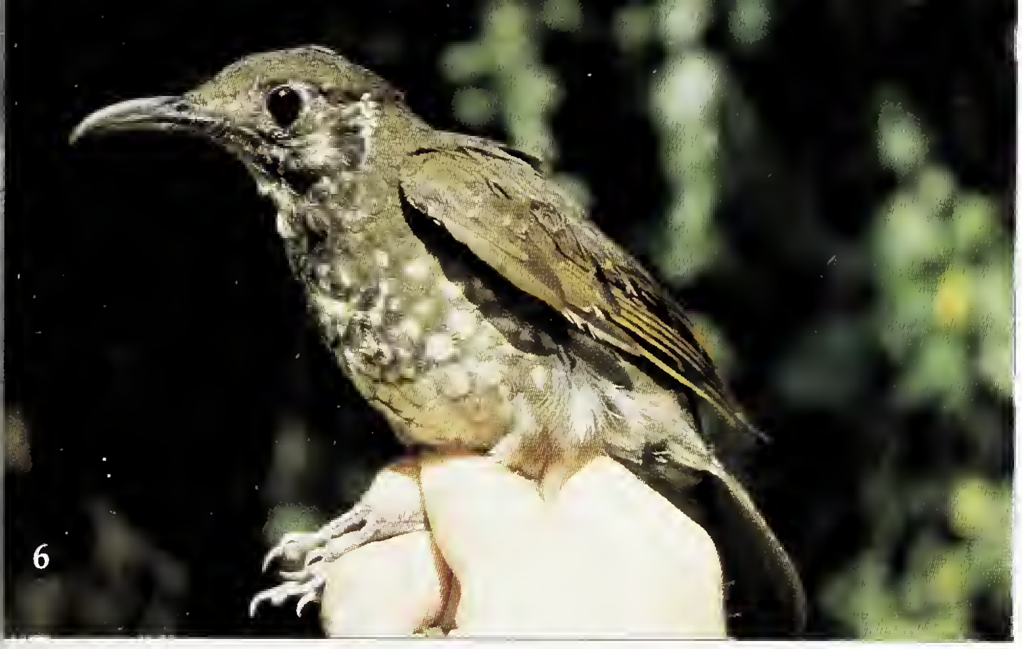
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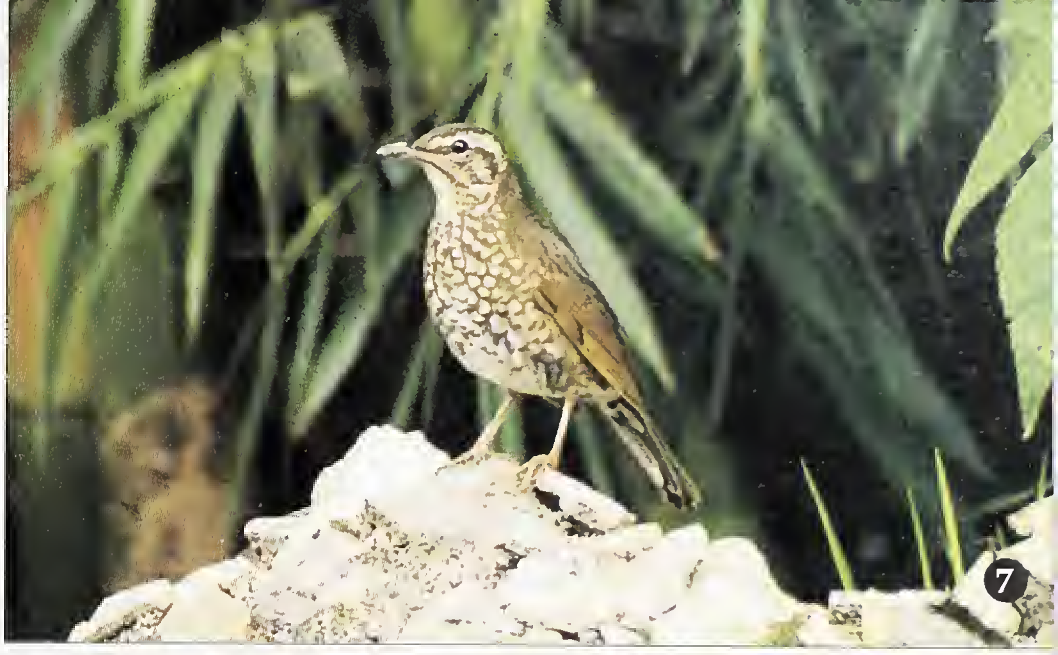
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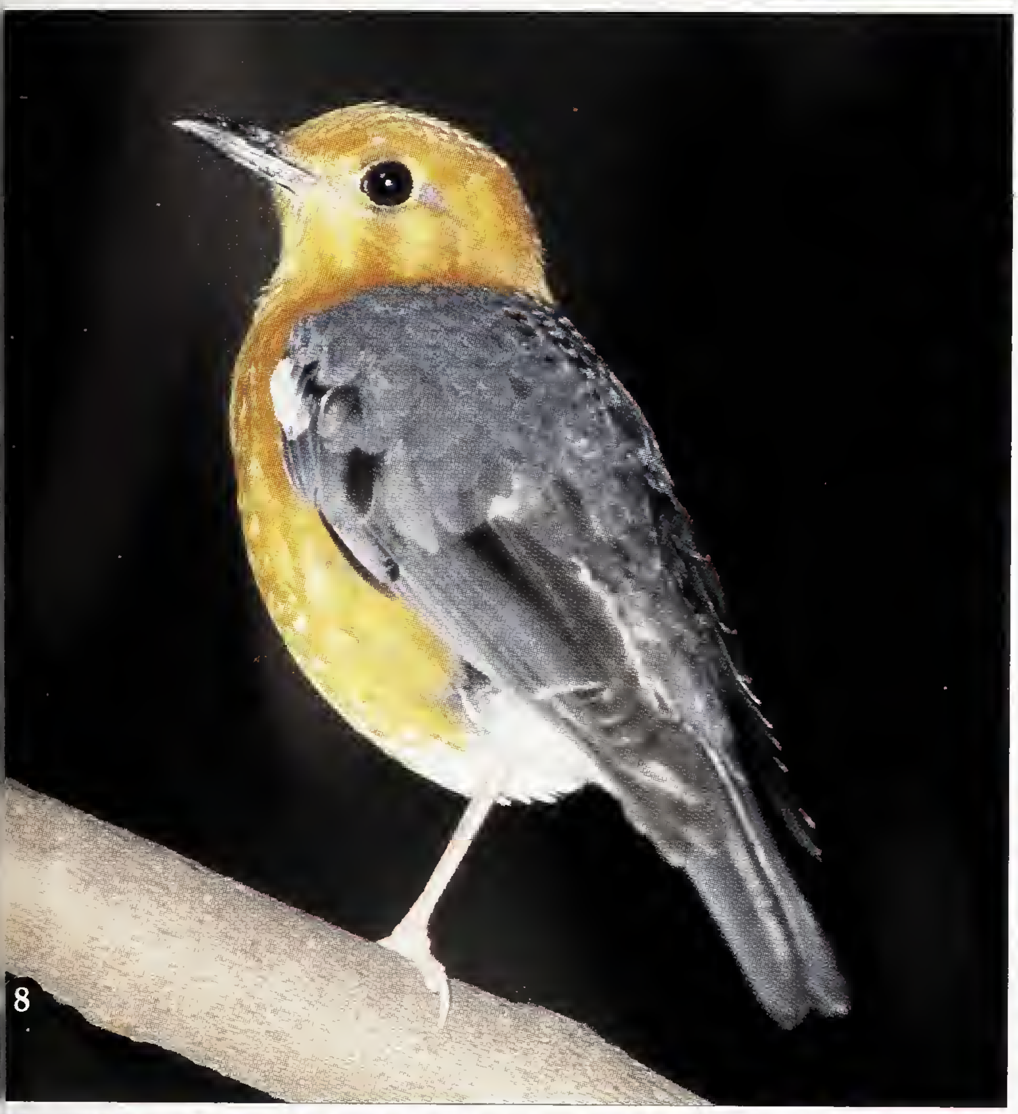
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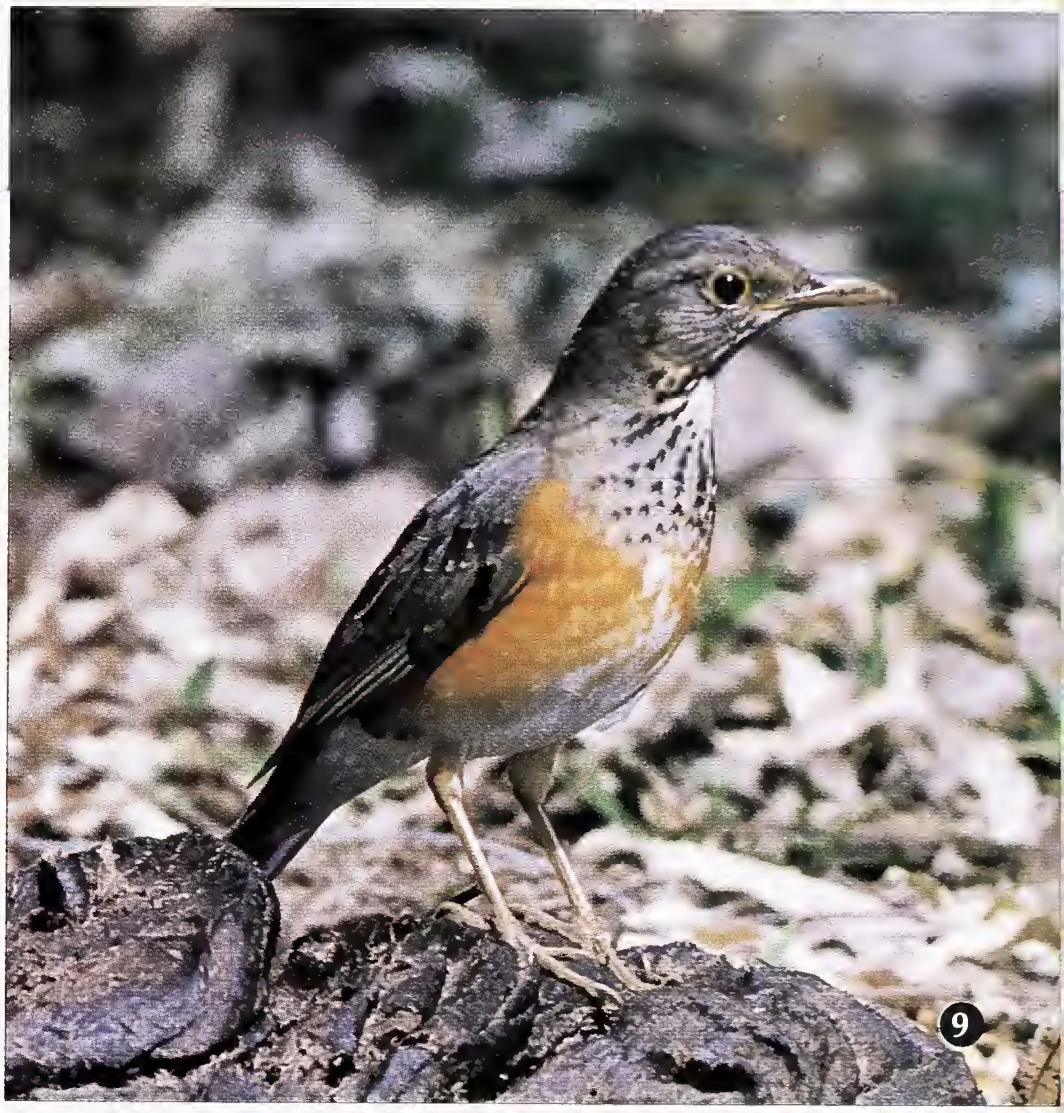
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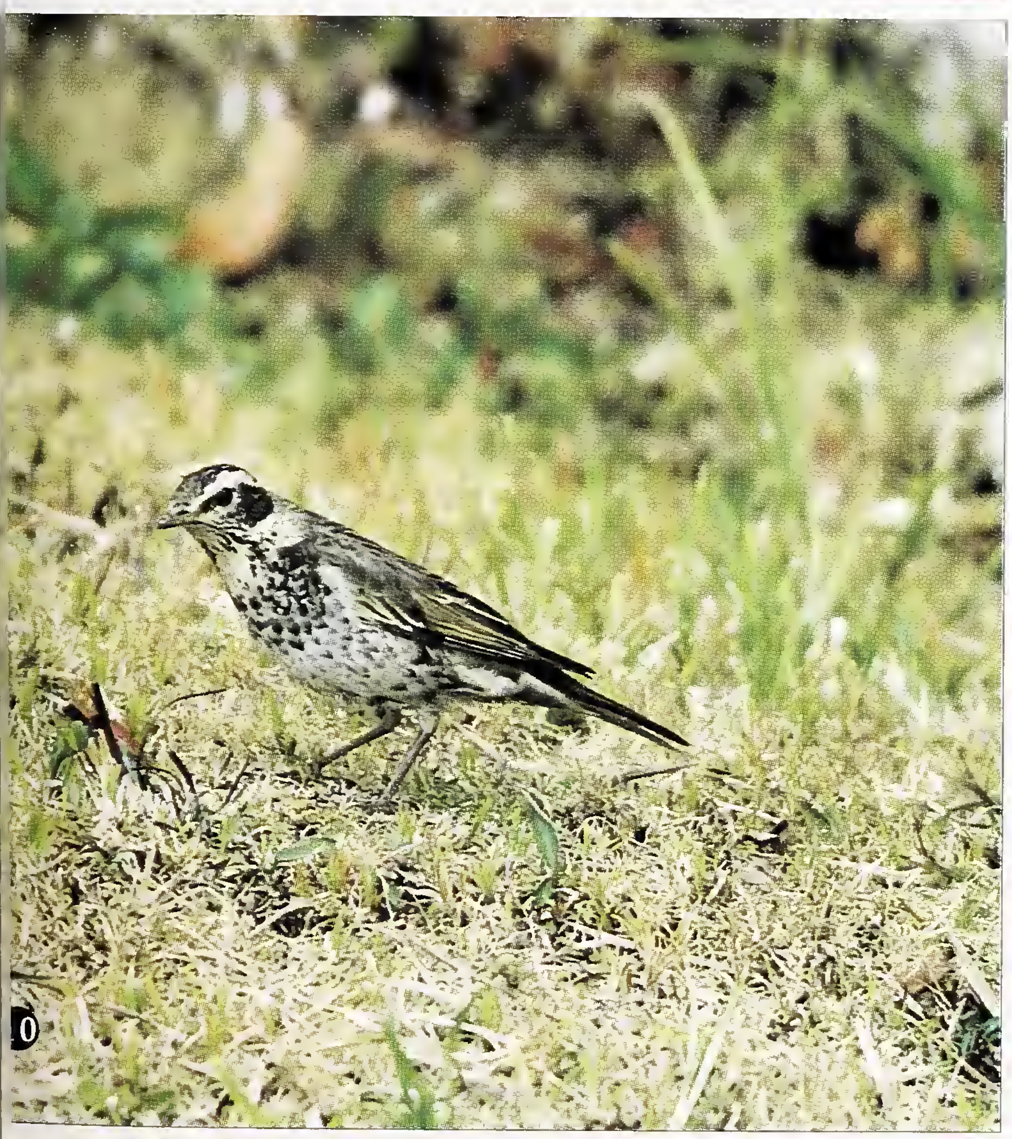
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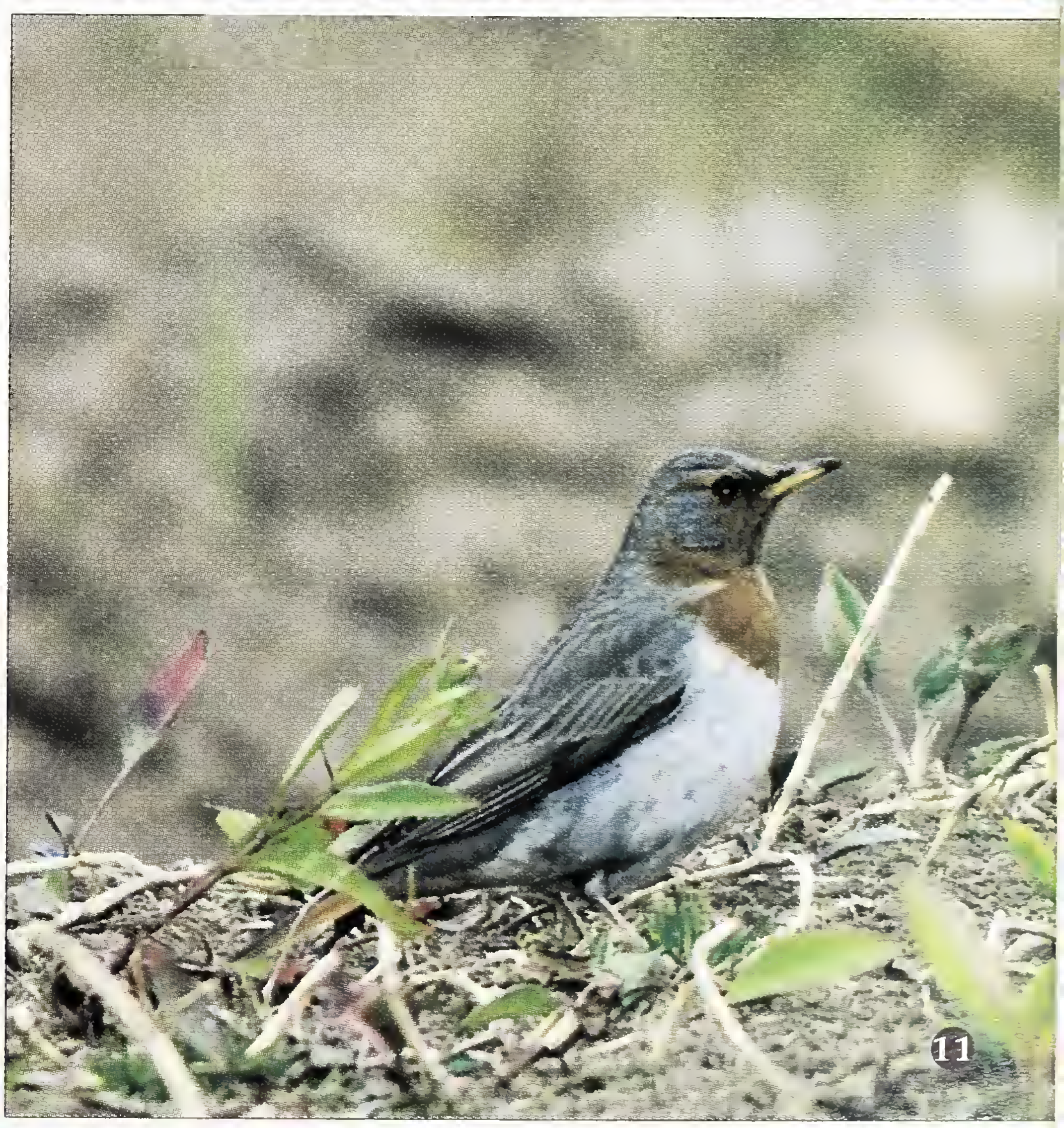
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Production of this double colour plate
has been generously sponsored by Leica
(Captions are on page 37)

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recorded in February 1980 when three individuals were sighted on Doi Inthanon, a huge irruption occurred in January and February 1982 with more than 100 together around the summit bog and others present at lower levels. Elsewhere during this period there were birds at Doi Pha Hom Pok, Doi Pui and Doi Mon Chong and some were reported from the open plains around Fang, Thathon and Chiang Mai. Since then, Dusky Thrushes have been recorded in small numbers in at least six subsequent winters including one bird this winter (1999/2000). The *eunomus* race of Dusky Thrush is distinctive with black on the crown and sides of the face and a long (often quite broad) white supercilium and most of the upperparts blackish with varying amounts of brown to rich brown fringes with bright coppery-red edges to the wing-coverts and bases of the flight feathers. The underwing coverts are bright chestnut to deep orange or reddish-buff. Immatures are similar to adults but have the upperparts broadly streaked with pale buffish-orange, the central shafts and the underparts are pale orange and mottled or spotted with black. First-winter birds are very similar to adult females but slightly darker or duller and have finely mottled upperparts with the edges of the scapulars and the centres to the back, rump and uppertail-coverts orange to deep reddish-buff with brown fringes (which may obscure the orange centres in some individuals). The tail is brown to blackish-brown. The wing-coverts are pale buff, greater coverts (most, if not all, retained from juvenile plumage) are similar but the tips are variable from whitish-buff (outer, unmoulted feathers) becoming pale orange to rich-brown with dark-brown inners (fresh feathers). The flight feathers are dark brown finely edged pale buff. The tips to the tertials are more broadly pale buff. The face is like an adult but often shows a paler or whiter flecked greyish (or darker) supercilium. The chin and throat are white or whitish, becoming mottled with reddish to dark or reddish-brown on the centres and tips to the feathers of the breast and flanks. It is very difficult to sex at this age, but brightly coloured birds are probably males and those with dull tones and heavy spotting on the breast and flanks are probably females. The bill is mostly dark horn or with dull yellow at the base of the lower mandible and cutting edges of the upper mandible. Intermediate birds can resemble either *eunomus* or nominate *naumanni* but with the blackish areas variable from reddish-brown through purple-brown to brown or have the upperparts similar to one race and the underparts more like the other.

Japanese Thrush is the rarest thrush to reach Thailand. It breeds in central China and is an occasional winter visitor to northern and central Laos. There are just three records of this species in Thailand — Doi Inthanon (February 1993), Sakaerat, near Khao Yai National Park (December 1998) and Phu Jong Na Yoi National Park, north-east Thailand (January 1999). Adult males are very distinctive, mostly jet-black with slate-grey upperparts, white lower breast and belly spotted heavily with black and white undertail coverts. The female is grey-brown on the face and upperparts with whitish underparts variably washed with reddish-orange on the sides of the breast to the underwing-coverts and sides of the throat to belly and flanks spotted with black. Female and immatures could be confused with the same age and sex Black-breasted Thrush but the former are not so extensively orange on the underparts. Also, Japanese Thrushes have more extensive spotting on the flanks. The upperparts of first-winter male Japanese Thrush are very similar to those of the adult male, except that they are slightly paler or blackish-grey. The edges to the blackish-brown flight feathers are browner (including the alula and primary coverts). The retained juvenile wing-coverts have pale buff-brown tips.

Acknowledgements

I am grateful for the help and up-to-date information on the numbers and distribution of thrushes in northern Thailand in winter 1999/2000 received from Phil Round, Tony Ball and Daniel Philippe. Thanks also to Robert Kirk of A & C Black (Publishers) Ltd. for kind permission to use the plates which accompany this paper.

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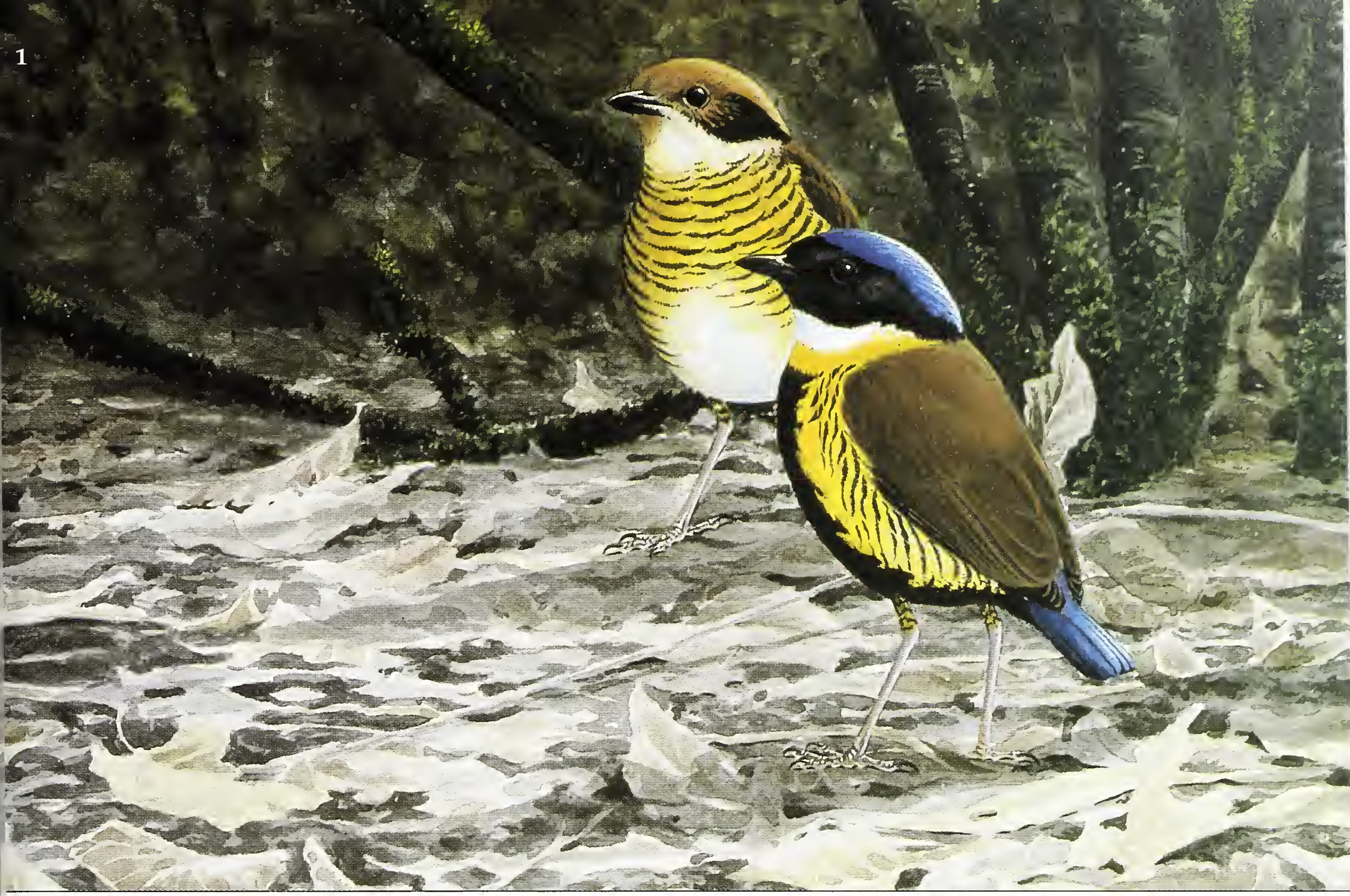
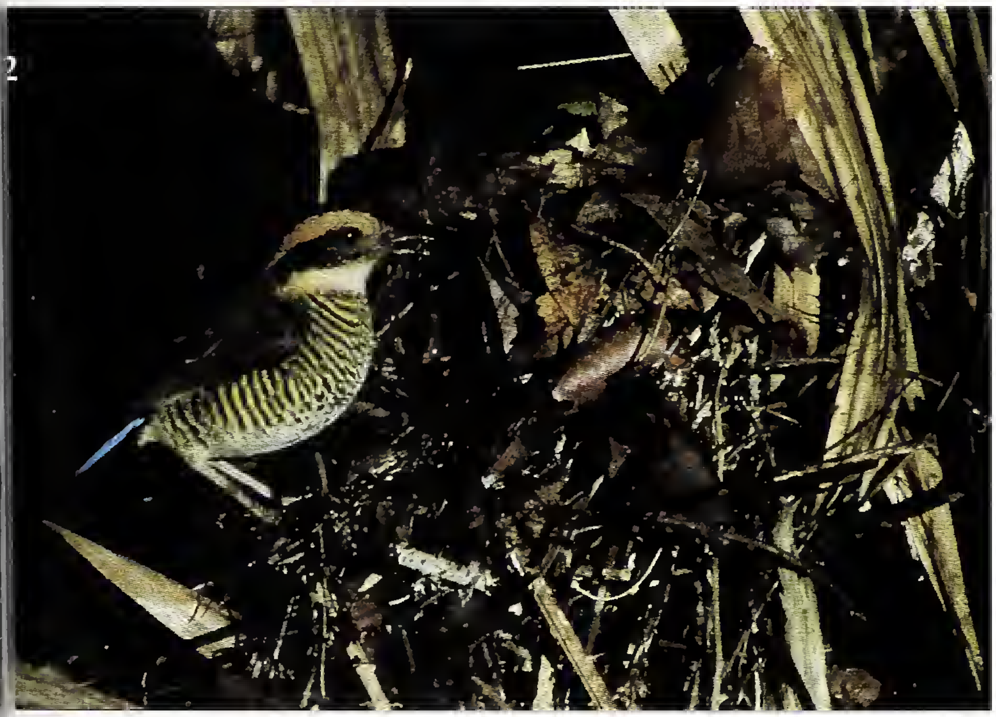
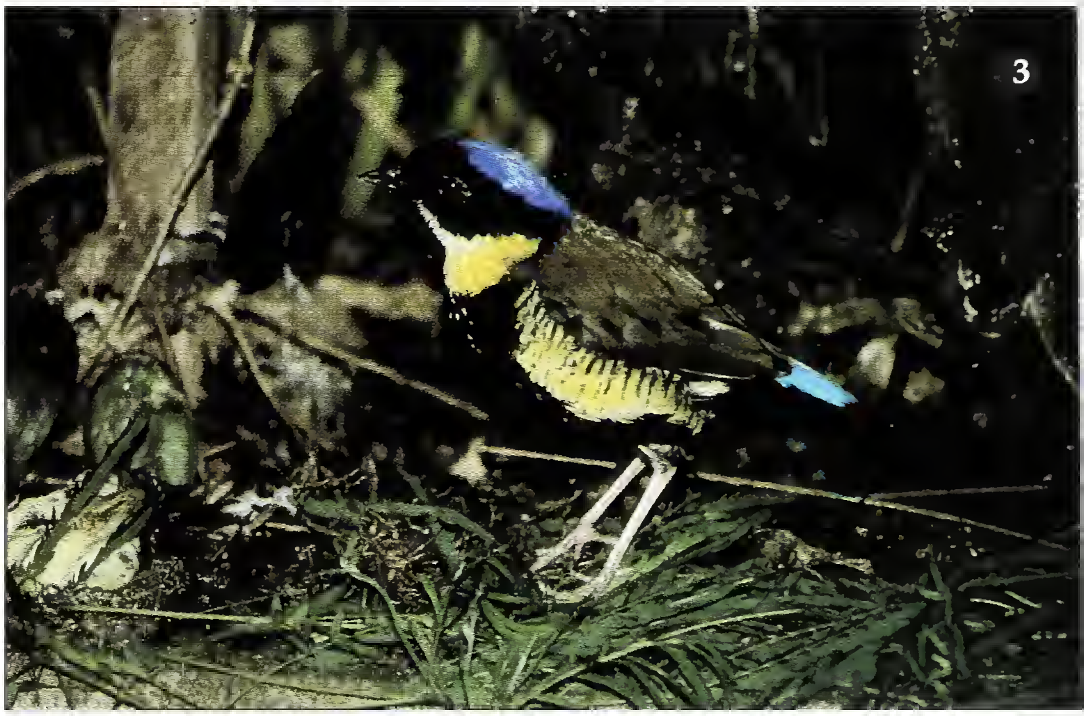
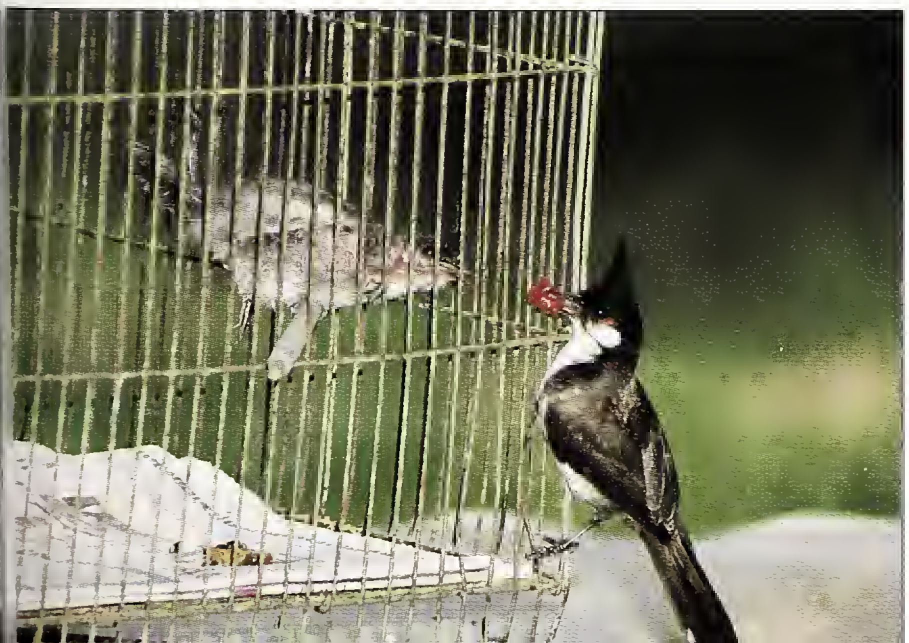
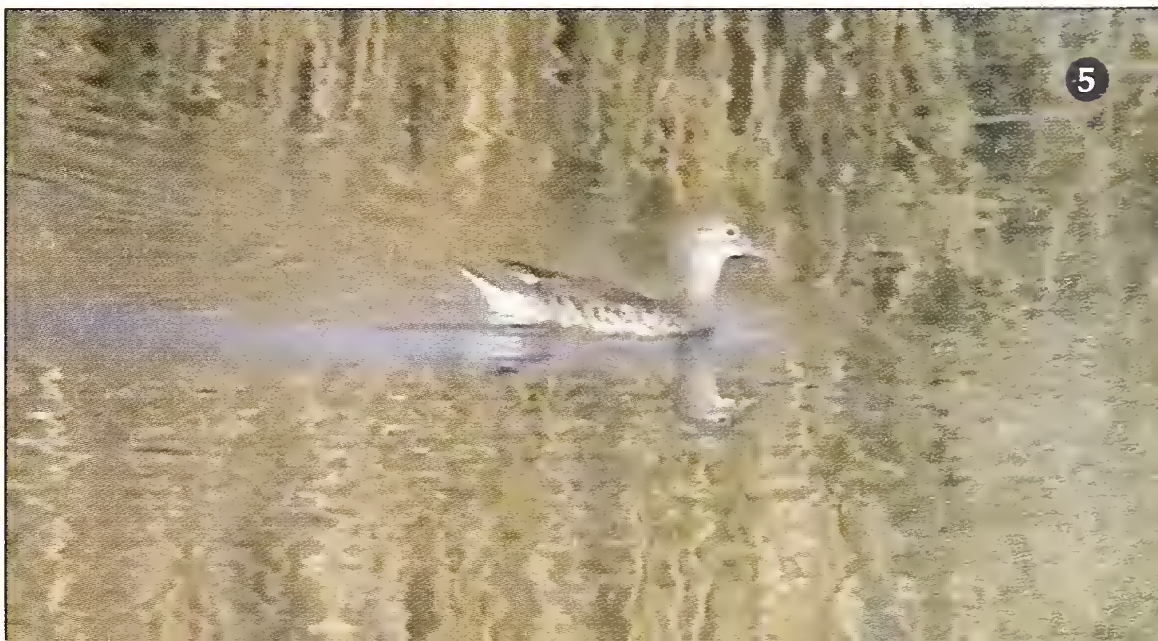






1 Pair of Gurney's Pittas *Pitta gurneyi* (Rare Bird Club painting by Norman Arlott)
2 Female Gurney's Pitta *Pitta gurneyi* at the nest, Khao Nor Chuchi (Photo: Uthai Treesucon)
3 Male Gurney's Pitta *Pitta gurneyi* (Photo: Phil Round)
4 Red-whiskered Bulbul *Pycnonotus jocosus pattani.* Even after a chick has been captured and placed in a cage the adult continues to feed it (Photo: Surapan Tinnalak)
5 Female Mandarin Duck *Aix galericulata*, Nepal, January 2000: see *From the Field*, p. 51 (Video grab by Mark Sutton)





Gurney's Pitta Campaign Update: May 2000

A brief report was enclosed with Bulletin 30 that summarised the position at the time of despatch in early December 1999 and the initiatives which were then in hand.

At the time of the above report there was still hope that negotiations, which were then ongoing between the Thai authorities and the Danish agency, DANCED, would result in the setting up of a follow-up project at Khao Nor Chuchi (KNC). The OBC learned in late January 2000 that DANCED would not provide any further funding and that hope of a new project was at an end.

This has left the OBC today as the main outside agent trying to act to protect the site.

The DANCED-funded KNC Lowland Forest Project finished in mid-1999 and, although it achieved considerable success, it failed to secure the future for Gurney's Pitta *Pitta gurneyi*. This was more a result of the time-frame of the project than a failure on the part of the participants. It is essential that some way be found to capture the imagination of the Thai people in any future initiative.

During the BirdLife World Conference in October 1999, OBC officers were party to efforts to raise the issue at the highest levels in Thailand. These efforts continued in December 1999 when a new opportunity to raise the issue arose. Whilst it is impossible to ascertain what priority Thai authorities have given to investigate the situation at KNC, these initiatives have had some results. During January and February 2000, a Privy Councillor headed an investigation in which both Philip Round, Project Manager of the KNC project, and Dr Samaisukh Sophasan, Senior Advisor to the project at Mahidol University, were interviewed and the civil authorities in Krabi province and the site itself were visited. Regrettably, our colleagues at Mahidol have heard little more and no new initiative has been announced, although it is rumoured that a "task force" may be set up.

The previous report referred to a planned seminar in Bangkok to brief Thai NGOs and government agencies about the position at KNC. This was held on 30th November 1999, paid for by the OBC and organised by OBC representative and Chairman of Bird Conservation Society Thailand, Uthai Treesucon. It created considerable interest in the Thai press and resulted in follow-up radio and TV interviews. This interest was sustained for some weeks and it is apparent that nowadays there is sufficient interest in environmental issues in Thailand for such items to be regarded as genuinely important and newsworthy. This is an angle that it may be possible to pursue further.

A full survey of the encroachment and cutting of the National Reserve Forest (NRF) adjacent to the Wild Life Sanctuary (WLS) at KNC was continued until December 1999. At present, month by month mapping of new encroachment of the NRF (which OBC is fully aware is ongoing) is not being undertaken. Other priorities are being followed up. Depending on the outcome of other initiatives, it will be relatively easy to build on the comprehensive mapping carried out to date at a later stage.

OBC officers made two visits to Krabi and KNC during March and April 2000. The first visit by Brian Sykes, OBC Secretary, accompanied by Philip Round, was partly intended as a familiarisation exercise in addition to determining the optimum immediate action to take on the ground. It was concluded that the right course of action was to employ Yothin Meekaeo, the most experienced fieldworker from the former DANCED project, to undertake a comprehensive survey of the number of Gurney's Pitta in the area during the 2000 breeding season. This programme is taking place between April and June 2000 and involves visits to all previously documented territories and mapping of the present breeding territories. The last comprehensive survey was undertaken in 1997 and will form the basis for comparison. The project is supervised by Philip Round and is being funded by *Club 300 Sweden*. Present indications are that ten pairs have been located and two nests have been found. OBC Council thanks our friends in Sweden for their support.

Marcus Kohler, OBC Conservation Officer, accompanied by Tony Juniper of Friends of the Earth and Dr Samaisukh Sophasan of Mahidol University, made the second visit. Their main objectives were to collect data for a press campaign and to interview senior civil officials of Krabi province. One potentially important outcome of the interview with the Deputy Governor of Krabi province was that he agreed to restart regular meetings of the steering committee that had been set up as a key recommendation of the DANCED project to be the administrative body for KNC. The framework of the press campaign is being worked on currently and there may be equally important opportunities to obtain coverage within Thailand as well as within the western press. OBC Council thanks Philip Round and Dr Samaisukh Sophasan for giving their time and experience to help make these visits successful. Council also thanks WildWings for donating Tony Juniper's flight costs.

During the above visits, and thanks to subsequent reports from visiting birdwatchers, it was concluded that it would be beneficial to have a foreign "birdwatching warden" based at KNC, at least during the breeding season when most birdwatchers visit the site. This would be a role for an experienced, sympathetic individual, perhaps a reserve warden on sabbatical leave for several months. The role would include giving advice to visiting birdwatchers on how to find the birds so as to cause them a minimum of disturbance, noting and correlating visitors' observations, liaising with Yothin Meekeao and the local Royal Forestry Department officers on matters such as reports of traps, trapping and other interference within the WLS and NRF. It is suggested that a code of conduct for visitors be drawn up and publicised and that another useful function might be to liaise with the local tour operators from Krabi who bring foreign tourists to site on day trips. OBC Council believes that it is important for visiting birdwatchers to be seen as "self-policing" so that it cannot be claimed that it is birdwatchers and not other forest encroachers (forest product collectors, illegal hunters etc) who are causing any decline in pitta numbers. OBC Council is interested to hear from anyone whose experience might match the criteria outlined above.

Discussions with interested parties concerning the data gathered during these visits are still in progress. Brian Sykes has planned a further visit during June 2000 to follow up leads and hold discussions with interested parties within Thailand. Work has started on the press campaign and members should look out for coverage in *BBC Wildlife* magazine.

OBC Council once again thanks all those members who have helped so far in any way. Your support has been most encouraging and continues to be of vital importance. Further pledges and donations will be gratefully received.

Note to birders: If you intend to visit Khao Nor Chuchi this year, please contact Marcus Kohler at the OBC. Birders are also reminded that the use of tape playback to lure in Gurney's Pittas is prohibited at Khao Nor Chuchi.

Brian Sykes, OBC General Secretary
Marcus Kohler, OBC Conservation Officer
Tony Juniper, Friends of the Earth

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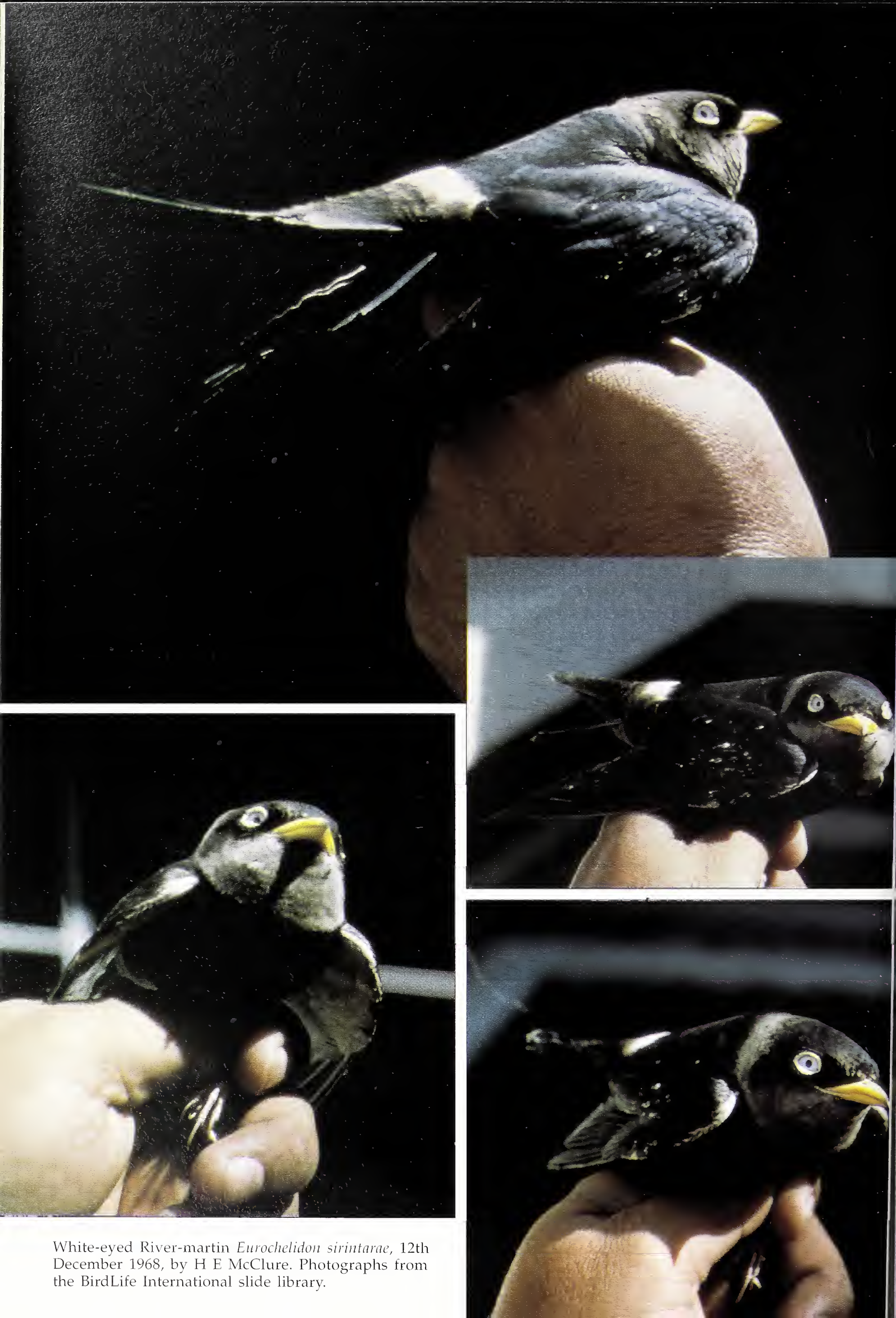

White-eyed River-martin *Eurochelidon sirintarae*, 12th December 1968, by H E McClure. Photographs from the BirdLife International slide library.

Little-known Oriental bird

White-eyed River-martin *Eurochelidon sirintarae*

In January 1968, during the course of ringing activities at a wetland site in south-central Thailand, fieldworkers discovered a strange swallow amongst large numbers of migrant hirundines. It proved to be a new species and was christened the White-eyed River-martin *Eurochelidon sirintarae* by Kitti Thonglongya, who dedicated "this spectacular and beautiful bird" to Princess Sirindhorn Thepratanasuda. Over the next three years several more specimens were collected at the same site, but apart from these, and a fleeting observation in 1978, this remarkable bird has effectively vanished. An avian enigma, it has come to epitomise the mythical allure of rarity to the birdwatcher, and for three decades it has symbolised the Asian mystery of the ornithological world. As such it has appeared in logo form in the pages of this journal as the archetypal little-known bird. The time has come to compile our knowledge of the species and to present it afresh in the hope that it might lead to a dramatic rediscovery.

To begin with, we need to retrace the events of January and February 1968 and glean what we can from the available facts. The site of discovery is first misleadingly given as "a big marsh on the Chao Praya River".[1] The type-locality is then specified as "Bung (= Nong = Lake) Boraphet, Amphoe Muang, Nakhon Sawan Province, central Thailand",[1] and from its subsequent description as "a shallow, marshy, reed-filled lake of 25,000 hectares" it seems clear that this is the "big marsh" originally mentioned (a point confirmed by Thonglongya[2]). Rediscovery efforts in 1980–1981 were apparently concentrated "on an island where all of Kitti's river martins had been captured",[3] suggesting that, at one time, confidence was high that a very precise origin was known.

This no longer appears to be the case. The first White-eyed River-martins were reportedly caught while night-trapping roosting swallows (*Hirundo rustica*, *H. daurica*, *Riparia riparia*), wagtails and warblers by casting a fishing net over a reedbed,[1] a method repeated by subsequent authors.[3,4,5] However, according to a local technician who worked with the original field team, the birds were neither seen in the field nor trapped by any of the team members, but rather were brought in to the team's hotel in nearby Nakhon Sawan by villagers following a broadcast appeal for live wild birds for ringing purposes.[6] It seems likely, therefore, that the precise site of collection is impossible to determine, but that it is certainly in the region of Bung Boraphet, and most likely at the lake itself.

Whatever their exact origins, nine specimens were initially collected: one each on 28th and 29th January (although the label on specimen 53-1218 actually states 27th January 1968[6]) and seven on 10th February 1968.[1] From analysis of the resultant skins its closest ally was deemed to be the African River-martin *Pseudochelidon eurystomina*.[1] Initially described as congeneric,[1] the African species and the Asian species differ markedly in the size of their bills and eyes, suggesting that "they have very different feeding ecologies, *sirintarae* probably being able to take much larger prey and perhaps in different microhabitats".[7] The gape of *sirintarae* is swollen and hardened, unlike the softer, fleshier, much less prominent gape of *eurystomina*.[1,19] The feet and claws of *sirintarae* are unusually "large and robust" for an aerial feeder,[1] and the two species also have different toe proportions, which might suggest dissimilar nesting habits.[19] These differences are sufficiently pronounced in the view of some taxonomists to permit the allocation of its own genus, *Eurochelidon*,[7] although other authors support the retention of both species in *Pseudochelidon*, arguing that they mirror patterns in other congeneric hirundines.[8] Whether treated as one genus or two, the syringeal structures of the two river-martins are divergent enough from those of the Hirundininae to confirm subfamily distinction from the true swallows, and apparently enough to suggest that they might even belong in a separate family.[1,9]

Shortly after these first specimens, a tenth bird was caught in November 1968[2] and brought alive to Bangkok where it was photographed in December 1968.[3] Furthermore, at least two birds ("one pair") reached, but soon afterwards died, in Dusit Zoo in Bangkok in early 1971.[3] The only widely reported field observation was of six individuals flying low over Bung Boraphet towards dusk on 3rd February 1978.[10] In addition, four "probable" immature White-eyed River-martins were reportedly observed perched in trees on Temple Island in Bung Boraphet in January 1980,[3,5] and one was reputedly trapped by local people in 1986.[11] Both these records remain unconfirmed. Several subsequent searches have tried to locate the species around the site. For example, eleven amateur birding groups surveyed the lake unsuccessfully during 1979.[3] Investigations were carried out between December 1980 to March 1981 by a team from the Association for the Conservation of Wildlife but, despite netting many roosting Barn Swallows in reedbeds, they failed to reveal any river-martins.[12] In 1988 another concerted effort to relocate the species was undertaken at Bung Boraphet, ending with failure as the swallow roosts were highly disturbed and mobile.[13]

The real number of White-eyed River-martins trapped in the 1960s and 1970s may have been much higher than these figures suggest. In the wave of public and media interest following the sensational discovery of the species, trappers are rumoured to have caught around 120 individuals and sold them to the director of the Nakhon Sawan Fisheries Station.[3,5] Moreover, local markets were reported to have had "several other specimens" in January–February of succeeding years.[10] Having been found on Thai soil and decorated with the name of Thai royalty, there was a significant local demand for specimens or caged examples of the species, for zoos, presentation to dignitaries or as curios for the affluent.

What has become of the White-eyed River-martin? Did this harvest of hirundines extinguish it entirely? Were these last known individuals merely the doomed remnants of a population displaced by disturbance from a specialised breeding habitat?[5] Perhaps. It is quite conceivably extinct, and if it still survives its population seems likely to be tiny. The original series of specimens taken in early 1968 were outnumbered by hordes of trapped Barn Swallows by a ratio of 9:6,000.[1] In spite of this exceptional rarity, it was thought that the species might be regular at Bung Boraphet since the local bird-catchers had a name for it, *nok ta phong*, the "swollen-eyed bird".[1] Unfortunately, there has been a "drastic decline" in the Bung Boraphet swallow population from "hundreds of thousands" reported around 1970 to maximum counts of 8,000 made in the winter of 1980–1981, although it is not certain if this represents a real decline or a shift in site in response to persecution.[3] However, an estimated 100,000 swallows were present at a roost near Chotiravi, near Bung Boraphet, in August 1986[11] and there were 30,000 at Bung Boraphet in May 1988.[11] Nevertheless, a dealer working the large Chotiravi roost claimed never to have encountered the species.[11] The general feeling is that "an absence of sightings since early 1980, despite numerous observational efforts, cast ominous doubts over the survival of the White-eyed River-martin".[3]

Unfortunately, the habits of swallows around the lake appear to have altered recently, with very few birds roosting in the reedbeds until late winter. Much of the population now roosts in sugarcane plantations, moving back to the reedbeds after the cane has been harvested.[13] The roosts also form well after dark, whereas they once gathered before dusk.[13] These changes are probably the result of prolonged disturbance by trappers.[11] In any case, the swallow roosts are more mobile and difficult to locate, factors that have further obstructed the rediscovery of the White-eyed River-martin.

The reduction in Barn Swallow populations in the Bung Boraphet area is difficult to explain but intensive trapping activities for the purpose of selling birds as food in local markets must have played a major role, as must the annual destruction of roosting sites to make way for lotus cultivation.[3] Huge areas of reedbed in areas frequented by roosting swallows were being burnt in February 1986.[11] The hunting of hirundines without a licence has been illegal since 1972, although this legislation is rarely enforced.[3] Relations between conservationists and bird trappers at Bung Boraphet are occasionally fraught, to the extent that a reserve ranger was killed when trying to apprehend poachers at roosts in 1987.[13]

It seems that any rediscovery efforts should now be targeted away from Bung Boraphet, and indeed perhaps away from Thailand. How might we judge where best to look? What secrets have hitherto been disclosed that might help direct our search? Unhelpfully, the ecology of this bird remains almost totally unknown, and thus ornithologists have looked to its presumed relative, the African River-martin, to provide clues. Since *P. eurystomina* feeds largely over both forest and open grassy country, nesting colonially in tunnels dug in sandbars of large rivers[14] it has been inferred that *E. sirintarae* possibly does or once did the same.[4] However, the differently shaped toes might suggest otherwise.[19] At least one of the initial specimens had mud or sand adhering to its claws, and while this perhaps suggests a terrestrial perching habit,[6] most swallows occasionally do the same, especially when collecting nest material. Another clue: in holding cages used during the swallow ringing programme, the birds stood quietly in the corner of the cage in "strong contrast to other swallows which move rapidly from perch to perch calling repeatedly".[1]

In the unconfirmed report of 1980, individuals were flying after insects with some Barn Swallows and sometimes perching on the tops of trees.[20] During the 1978 sighting they were apparently skimming the water surface, possibly to drink.[10] While these accounts describe behaviour characteristic of most swallows, the only direct dietary evidence is the fragment of a large beetle found in the stomach of a specimen.[1] This fact, along with the mandibular morphology of the species, implies that it consumes sizeable prey.

What about breeding season, distribution and migratory behaviour? Five of the nine specimens collected in late January and early February 1968 were immature;[1] they were later termed "juvenile", and some of the other material as "subadult"[2] (although this is not mentioned in the original description). A breeding site within Thailand was initially considered plausible on the grounds that so many of the type series were young.[2] It has also been speculated that if nesting occurs in Thailand it is most likely to do so between March and April, as this coincides with the local nesting season for the majority of insectivorous birds, while the monsoon rains from May onwards presumably raise water levels above the riverine sandflats postulated to be the favoured nesting habitat of the species.[5,6,10] It is unlikely, however, that juvenile plumage would be retained for eight months, and thus these two facts are difficult to reconcile. The White-eyed River-martin has otherwise been thought a non-breeding visitor to south-central Thailand[20] and "clearly migratory",[4] but these assumptions should also be treated with care. Although it has only been found between December and February, and despite the above disparity, there is insufficient information to rule out breeding in the Nakhon Sawan area.[6,11] In conclusion, it is unclear whether the species is, or was, a migrant at all.

As recent searches around Bung Boraphet have been unsuccessful, let us assume it is a migrant. If it travelled across Thailand, where did it come from? The riverine nesting grounds might possibly lie along one of the four major watercourses (the Ping, Wang, Yom and Nan) which drain northern Thailand, either in the immediate vicinity of Nakhon Sawan or to the north.[5,6] If it came from further afield, perhaps these putative breeding grounds lie on one of the other major river systems of South-East Asia, such as the Mekong in China, Laos or Cambodia, or the Salween and Irrawaddy in Myanmar.[5,6] Evidence that the species breeds, or has ever occurred, in China is scant, although a painting by a Chinese artist held in the Sun Fung Art House of Hong Kong appears to depict the species.[15] This tentative clue has failed to lead to any further information, and in any case the subject of the painting is more likely to be an Oriental Pratincole *Glareola maldivarum*.[16]

A survey of the Nan, Yom and Wang rivers in northern Thailand was carried out in May 1969, but was not comprehensive and relied chiefly on interviewing villagers, none of whom seemed to know the bird.[2] Rivers near the Chinese border of Laos were searched in April 1996, local people being shown illustrations of the species, but again without success (W. Robichaud verbally 1997). Very few other surveys have looked for it outside Thailand and there is still scope for research in remote regions where a population might survive.

Throughout its possible range there is a catalogue of pressures potentially imposed on the species.[5,6] Man has drastically altered the lowlands of central and northern Thailand: huge areas are now deforested, agriculture has intensified, pesticide use is ubiquitous and urban environments have spread extensively.[5,6] In addition, all major lowland rivers and their banks suffer a high level of disturbance by fishermen, hunters, vegetable growers and sand-dredgers.[5,6] Whole communities of nesting riverine birds have vanished from large segments of their ranges in South-East Asia owing to habitat destruction, human persecution and intense disturbance of most navigable waterways.[5,17,18] Local people routinely trap or shoot birds for food and for sale in local markets.[5,6] Even at Bung Boraphet Non-Hunting Area (established in 1979[3]) the trapping of birds has continued, at some level, up to the present.[5,6] If the species preferentially forages over forest, its numbers could already have declined to a perilously low level at the time of its discovery because of deforestation and the intensification of agriculture in river valleys.[5,6]

These threats are based on the ecological traits inferred by its suspected taxonomic affinities. It should be borne in mind that riverine nesting habits and preferences for forest are only an assumption, and that it might conceivably utilise some entirely different habitat. Even the name 'river-martin' is perhaps a complete misnomer, as the species has never been seen on a river and is no longer considered congeneric with the African River-martin.[7] Interestingly, the most recent scrutiny of specimens suggested that it was perhaps nocturnal, or at least highly crepuscular, based principally on its unusually large eyes.[19] This raises the possibility that it is normally a cave dweller or a hole-rooster in trees or rocks, emerging to feed in twilight or darkness, and this opens up new avenues of exploration. There are, for example, limestone caves not far from Bung Boraphet, and many more in Laos and southern China.

While there is only a faint chance that this, "one of the most elusive species in the world",[15] still survives, it bears the extraordinary distinction of being highly unusual in appearance yet overlooked by naturalists in a well-worked country until the late 1960s. As it is thus either extremely rare or inexplicably cryptic, it is not yet time to give up hope for the 'swollen-eyed bird'. Its possible range should be revisited with a broader outlook. The prize, to any successful searcher, is considerable: solving one of the most puzzling mysteries of Asian ornithology.

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From the Field

Compiled by Craig Robson

These are largely unconfirmed records covering the period from December 1998 to March 2000. We urge that if they have not already done so, contributors provide full details to the relevant regional organisations in due course.

BANGLADESH

A week-long trek from Ruma *via* Keokradang (the highest point within Bangladesh at about 1,030 m) to Thamchi in Bandarban District of the Chittagong Hilltracts during 4–11th January 2000 resulted in one new species for Bangladesh: two **Orange-flanked Bush Robins** *Tarsiger cyanura* in forest remnants near Darjeelingpara at 950 m on 7th January (PTh, DJ). Notable records on this trek, all recorded in remnant forest areas near Darjeelingpara on 7–8th January, included: the first recent record of **Long-billed Thrush** *Zoothera monticola* (PTh); the fourth records of **Dark-sided Thrush** *Zoothera marginata* (PTh, DJ, RH, EH) and of **Pale-blue Flycatcher** *Cyornis unicolor* (DJ); a male **Indian Blue Robin** *Luscinia brunnea,* the third record (PTh); second record of **White-hooded Babbler** *Gampsorhynchus rufulus* (RH, EH); and the first recent record of **Striated Yuhina** *Yuhina castaniceps* – a flock of ten (DJ). Other species recorded (RH, EH, DJ, PTh) that are absent or very rare in the rest of Bangladesh included: **Bay Woodpecker** *Blythipicus pyrrhotis* recorded on two days (one recent record outside this region), **Mountain Imperial Pigeon** *Ducula badia* at two locations (first recent records), **Orange-bellied Leafbird** *Chloropsis hardwickii* (fairly common above 500 m), **Chestnut-bellied Nuthatch** *Sitta castanea* at one site, **Nepal House Martin** *Delichon nipalensis* (common throughout), and a flock of over 20 **Common Rosefinches** *Carpodacus erythrinus* near Thamchi. Also in the hill tracts, a male **Daurian Redstart** *Phoenicurus auroreus* was on the road between Bandarban and Ruma, the first recent record (PTh, DJ, EH, RH).

Elsewhere the only notable records were a population of at least 20 **Graceful Prinias** *Prinia gracilis* discovered on an island in the Jamuna River north of Aricha on 20th November 1999 (DJ, RH), the first recent record, and an **Asian Stubtail** *Urosphena squameiceps* in Lawacharra Forest on 18th December 1999 (PTh) at the same location as the first record for Bangladesh.

BHUTAN

During the spring, four new species for the country were recorded (PH *et al.*/Sunbird): five **Eurasian Curlews** *Numenius arquata*, a single **Lesser Sand Plover** *Charadrius mongolus* and a male **Hodgson's Bushchat** *Saxicola insignis* by the Sang Chhu near Wangdue Phodrang on 9th April and two **White-vented Mynas** *Acridotheres grandis* in Samdrup Jongkhar on 19th April. The same observers also found a **Blue-naped Pitta** *Pitta nipalensis* at the unusually high elevation of 1,820 m at Namling, Lingmethang Road, on 15th April.

CHINA

Lesser Spotted Eagle *Aquila pomarina*, a new species for China, was recorded in Xinjiang province, during a survey of ground-jays *Podoces* in July (GDo). Six new records for Shaanxi province were found in the Qinling Shan during late May/early June (MK, RL): three **Black Bazas** *Aviceda leuphotes* near Hua Yang, southern Shaanxi on 5th June, a pair of **Northern Goshawks** *Accipiter gentilis* at Changqing Shan on 4th June, up to five singing **Lemon-rumped Warblers** *Phylloscopus chloronotus*, 50 singing **Chinese Leaf Warblers** *P. sichuanensis* and 40 singing **Large-billed Leaf Warblers** *P. magnirostris* daily at Foping and Changqing Shan and a single **Rufous-faced Warbler** *Abroscopus albogularis* near Foping on 31st May. A further site for **Elliot's Pheasant** *Syrmaticus ellioti*, the most westerly known, has been found in southern Guizhou, following the discovery of the species in the Fanjing Shan, east Guizhou and Leigong Shan, east of Guiyang (*China Ornithological Society Newsletter* vol. 8, no 2, 1999). Fresh tail feathers were examined in a home in Shuichun, Libo County (c. 300 km SE of Guiyang) in February 1999 and a dead pair were found for sale in the county town. The birds were shot in the Sandu-Jiuqian area north of Libo and, in March 1999, a male specimen was taken in Shuichun where the first bird was found (LG). There were several interesting breeding records from Ba Bao Shan, Guangdong: **White-necklaced Partridge** *Arborophila gingica* with three young on 26th May (PL), a fledgling **Lesser Cuckoo** *Cuculus poliocephalus*, with a previously unrecorded host, **Sulphur-breasted Warbler** *Phylloscopus ricketti*, presumably in May (PL), a female **Silver Oriole** *Oriolus mellianus* on a nest during 3rd–9th May (RL) and a nest of **Brown-chested Jungle Flycatcher** *Rhinomyias brunneata* found and photographed in May (AH). Also of interest at this locality were six singing **Emei Leaf Warblers** *Phylloscopus emeiensis* in May (RL, PL). Elsewhere in the province, two juvenile **White-eared Night Herons** *Gorsachius magnificus* were seen at Che Ba Ling in the summer (RG, LKS). In west Yunnan, a pair of **Sclater's Monals** *Lophophorus sclateri* were found with two young at Jing Gua Ya on 6th June (ML) and up to 30 **Pompadour Green Pigeons** *Treron pompadora* in the Baoshan area, on 29–30th May (ML), were also of interest. The first records of **Ruddy Turnstones** *Arenaria interpres* in Xinjiang were received in 1999: on 18th May, six birds were seen at Bayinbulak wetland in the Tianshan Mountains (MM) and another was found at Pamir, western Xinjiang, on 29th August (YP).

INDIA

A single **Yellow-browed Warbler** *Phylloscopus inornatus* near Quality Inn, Kumaria, Uttar Pradesh on 18th January 1999 (PH *et al.*/Sunbird) was well out of range and the same observers had previously found one at Keoladeo Ghana National Park (Bharatpur) on 15th January 1999 (PH *et al.*/Sunbird). Another was seen at Ranthambhore Tiger Reserve on 3rd December 1999 (CR *et al.*/Birdquest). Single **Slaty-blue Flycatchers** *Ficedula tricolor* were seen at Ranthambhore Tiger Reserve on 30th November and Keoladeo Ghana NP on 5th February 2000 (CR *et al.*/Birdquest). Other rarities at Keoladeo Ghana NP included a **Little Crake** *Porzana parva* on 28th November (CR *et al.*/Birdquest). An impressive c. 750 **River Terns** *Sterna aurantia* were counted at a pre-roost gathering at the River Ganga (Ganges) at Garh Mukteshwar, Uttar Pradesh on 16th January 1999 (PH *et al.*/Sunbird). In Assam, there was a single **Pale-capped Pigeon** *Columba punicea* in the eastern section of Kaziranga National Park on 22nd April (NL). A visit to Mizoram in early spring (OJ), resulted in a number of new species for this little visited state. At Ngengpui Sanctuary (27th–31st March 1999), he found **Blue-eared Kingfisher** *Alcedo meninting*, **Crested Treeswift** *Hemiprocne coronata*, **Indian Pond Heron** *Ardeola grayii*, **Cinnamon Bittern** *Ixobrychus cinnamomeus*, **Spotted Bush Warbler** *Bradypterus thoracicus* and **Dusky Warbler** *Phylloscopus fuscatus*; at Phawngpui National Park (2nd–12th April), **Eurasian Sparrowhawk** *Accipiter nisus*, **White-browed Shortwing** *Brachypteryx montana*, **Golden Bush Robin** *Tarsiger chrysaeus* and **Crested Bunting** *Melophus lathami*, and at Dampa Tiger Reserve (16th–23rd April), **Oriental Cuckoo** *Cuculus saturatus*, **Asian Koel** *Eudynamys scolopacea*, **Blue-eared Kingfisher** and **Black-capped Kingfisher** *Halcyon pileata*.

INDONESIA

Flores

Four **Rusty-rumped Warblers** *Locustella certhiola* on Bidaderi Island, west Flores on 18th August (KDB/VENT) were the first confirmed from Wallacea. Two little-known endemics were found at a recently discovered locality: A total of six **Wallace's Hanging Parrots** *Loriculus flosculus* and a total of three **Flores Monarchs** *Monarcha sacerdotum*, along the Potowangka Road, north-east of Labuanbajo, west Flores in late summer/early autumn (KDB/VENT).

Sulawesi

Interesting records from the south coast of the northern peninsula (KDB/VENT) included two **Yellow-crested Cockatoos** *Cacatua sulphurea* flying over coastal swamp forest near Moutong in July, the first record from northern Sulawesi for c. 20 years, a total of five **Beach Thick-knees** *Esacus neglectus* between Moutong and Gorontalo in July and an adult **Horsfield's Bronze Cuckoo** *Chrysococcyx basalis* on 27th August, the third Sulawesi record.

Sumatra

Noteworthy observations during the period under review included three day-old **Red-billed Partridge** *Arborophila rubrirostris* chicks at Gunung Kerinci during 7–16th June (ABa, JG), four **Waterfall Swiftlets** *Hydrochous gigas* at Berestagi during 6–8th June (ABa, JG), a **Salvadori's Nightjar** *Caprimulgus pulchellus* seen and another heard at Gunung Kerinci during 7–16th June (ABa, JG), a single **Schneider's Pitta** *Pitta schneideri* heard at 1,040 m, 12–29 km above Mauro Sako, west Jambi in June (ABa, JG) and two **Large Frogmouths** *Batrachostomus auritus* and a **Bonaparte's Nightjar** *C. concretus* at Way Kambas, Lampung, during 18–20th June (ABa, JG).

West Timor

Interesting sightings (KDB/Vent) included two **Black Cuckoo Doves** *Turacoena modesta* at Bipolo on 20th August and a flock of six **Timor Imperial Pigeons** *Ducula cineracea* at Oel Nasi Forest Reserve on 22nd August, a new locality for this threatened species. Several breeding-plumaged **Red-capped Plovers** *Charadrius ruficapillus* on coastal sandflats and fish-ponds near Kupang on 20th and 22nd August were unseasonal.

LAOS

One of the most amazing recent records from the region came in the shape of an off-course immature **Great Frigatebird** *Fregata minor*, which was seen well over the Mekong River at Vientiane on 1st March 2000 (MP). Two **Curlew Sandpipers** *Calidris ferruginea* at the same locality on 22nd October (WD) were the first from N Laos and a single **Red-necked Stint** *C. ruficollis* at Latzen, Xiangkhouang, N Laos on 9th October (JP) was also of note.

MYANMAR

Another expedition to the mountains north-west of Putao, Kachin State, N Myanmar during 5–26th November (BKi, MB, HB, TBu, CG) turned up yet more new records for the region. Two new species and one new subspecies were added to the Myanmar and South-East Asia list: two male and three female **Rusty-bellied Shortwings** *Brachypteryx hyperythra* seen and another four or five probables heard (800–1,050 m) between 9th–23rd November, **Brown-headed Fulvetta** *Alcippe ludlowi*, with two on 14th November and a flock of 12 on 16th November (2,900 m), and the nominate race of **Dusky Thrush** *Turdus naumanni naumanni*, with one on 15th November, two in Ziyardum on 21st–22nd November and two near Kharlondum on 23rd November (altitudinal range 980–2,900 m). Two female **Eurasian Blackbirds** *Turdus merula* (1,015 m) at Ziyardum on 20th–21st November were also the first from Myanmar. There were also four new records for N Myanmar: three to eight **Steppe Eagles** *Aquila nipalensis* at c. 2,100 m elevation on 12th November, an immature **Rufous-bellied Eagle** *Hieraaetus kienerii* at c. 1,060 m, 1 km north-west of Ziyardum on 20th November, two **Tawny Owls** *Strix aluco* heard on 15th November and one each on 16th and 17th November (3,080 m), and **Broad-billed Warbler** *Tickellia hodgsoni*, with one on 10th November and two on 24th November (1,050–1,200 m); though one had previously been seen at 1,800 m on 1st February 1998 (BKi *et al.*). A full report of this and the 1998 expedition results, which include an impressive amount of new altitudinal data, will be published in due course.

NEPAL

Two **Jerdon's Bazas** *Aviceda jerdoni* near Daran Forest, south-east Nepal on 20th March 1999 (SB, PH, RKa *et al.*/Sunbird) were the first recorded from Nepal. Other reported vagrants were a female **Mandarin Duck** *Aix galericulata* on Lami Tal, Chitwan National Park on 4–5th January 2000 (MSu, JG, ME), the second record (page 41), and a single **Water Rail** *Rallus aquaticus* and a **Black Bittern** *Dupetor flavicollis* at Kosi Tappu on 4th March 1999 (DS). A **Grey-cheeked Warbler** *Seicercus poliogenys* with **Yellow-bellied Warblers** *Abroscopus superciliaris*, near Tiger Tops, Chitwan NP on 16th March 1999 (DS) was unusual and, at Phulchowki, Kathmandu Valley, there was a **Purple Cochoa** *Cochoa purpurea* on 30th April (NL) and a **Dark-rumped Rosefinch** *Carpodacus edwardsii* on 25th February 1999 (PH *et al.*/ Sunbird).

PHILIPPINES

There were several new records from the Batanes (MP): three **Buff-banded Rails** *Gallirallus philippensis* and a **Baillon's Crake** *Porzana pusilla* at San Antonio on 16th July, an **Osprey** *Pandion haliaetus* near Itbut, southern Batan Is. on 17th July and an **Oriental Honey-buzzard** *Pernis ptilorhyncus* at Mt Iraa on 16th July. Three **House Swifts** *Apus affinis* in Malaybalay, on 18th August (MP), were new for Mindanao. Noteworthy breeding records, extending known seasonality (MP), included a nest-building **Philippine Coucal** *Centropus viridis* at Mt Iraya, Batan Is. on 16th July, two newly fledged **Chestnut-eared Bulbuls** *Hypsipetes amaurotis* in the Batan Is. on 14th July and a fledgling **Philippine Bulbul** *H. philippinus* in Northern Sierra Madre Natural Park, Luzon on 6th August. More notable unseasonal records (MP) were a **Wood Sandpiper** *Tringa glareola* at San Antonio, Batan Is., on 16th July, six **Oriental Pratincoles** *Glareola maldivarum* at Manila Domestic Airport on 13th July, a breeding-plumaged **Whiskered Tern** *Chlidonias hybridus* at Palanan River, Northern Sierra Madre NP on 7th August and six **Intermediate Egrets** *Mesophoyx intermedia* at San Antonio, Batan Is., on 16th July. Also of interest were 130+ **Philippine Ducks** *Anas* *luzonica* on the sea in Subic Bay, Luzon on 3rd March 1999 (ABa, KT, NB, BW) and a small flock of **Tufted Ducks** *Aythya fuligula* on Lake Naujan, Mindoro (apparently the first from the island) and a single **Asian House Martin** *Delichon dasypus* at the American Cemetery, Manila sometime during 30th January–12th February 2000 (CH, DU).

SINGAPORE

An immature female **Tufted Duck** *Aythya fuligula* in the bay at Changi Central South on 26th December 1999 (AL, EL, RO, SR) was the first Singapore record, as was an adult **Long-billed Plover** *Charadrius placidus* at Changi Central South bay on 17–19th November (RO, SR, EL). Single immature **Great Cormorants** *Phalacrocorax carbo*, another potential first, were seen at Kranji Reservoir on 16th December 1999 (SR, MS) and Changi Central South bay on 23rd December 1999 (RO, SR). It is possible that the former bird was an escapee from Jurong Bird Park but the latter occurred in association with very strong northerly winds. Other vagrants were a **Green Sandpiper** *Tringa ochropus* at Changi Central marsh on 7th December 1999 (SR, SW), the sixth record, a **Spoon-billed Sandpiper** *Calidris pygmeus* at Changi Central South bay on 26th (AC, KK) and 27th December 1999 (EL, RO, SR), an adult **Pectoral Sandpiper** *C. melanotos* at Changi Central South from 28th October until the end of 1999 (MD, SR *et al.*), the second record, a **Pheasant-tailed Jacana** *Hydrophasianus chirurgus* at MacRitchie north-west on 16th December 1999 (GD, SR, MS), a single **Common Ringed Plover** *C. hiaticula* and a **Small Pratincole** *Glareola lactea* (the fourth record) at Changi Central marsh on 23rd December 1999 (RO, SR) and a **Two-barred Warbler** *Phylloscopus plumbeitarsus* at Changi Central South on 17–19th November (RO, SR, EL), the second record. There were also further records of **Vinous-breasted Starling** *Sturnus burmannicus*, with one along the viaduct from Seletar Expressway to Central Expressway on 14th November (BGr, LKC, SR), one at Changi Central South on 10th December 1999 (SR) and singles at Lower Seletar Dam and Yishun Avenue on 25th December 1999 (SR). All were of the race *leucocephalus* and the seasonality of records over the past few years strongly points to wild occurrences rather than escapes from captivity. A juvenile **Yellow-eared Spiderhunter** *Arachnothera chrysogenys* was still present at Mandai Orchid Garden on 15th July (PB, EL, RO, SR). The species is now thought to be only a rare (post-breeding?) visitor and recent records have all been of juveniles. Singapore's first **Velvet-fronted Nuthatch** *Sitta frontalis*, which turned up in 1996, was still present at Bukit Timah Nature Reserve on 6th July (PB, SR).

SRI LANKA

New national records were a male **Yellow-rumped Flycatcher** *Ficedula zanthopygia* in Block 4 of Yala National Park on 7th March 1999 (DW, SRo), perhaps only the second for the Indian subcontinent, and a single **Dusky Warbler** *Phylloscopus fuscatus* in Pugoda on 13th March 1999 (DW, KG, US). Other noteworthy recent records included a single **Red-necked Stint** *Calidris ruficollis* at Bundala salt-pans on 10th February 1999 (DW), a **Sharp-tailed Sandpiper** *C. acuminata* at Kirinda Kalapuwa in mid-December 1998 (DW), an immature female **Amur Falcon** *Falco amurensis* east of the dam at Udawalwe Reservoir in early December 1998 (DW) and several **Rusty-rumped Warblers** *Locustella certhiola* at Bellanwila Sanctuary during winter 1998/99 (DW). An unusually large number of **Rosy Starlings** *Sturnus roseus* occurred during winter 1999/2000, with at least two roosting sites holding about 100,000 birds each (DW).

TAIWAN

Plenty of interesting records were received for the period August–December 1999. New for the country were a **Spotted Crake** *Porzana porzana* at Hu-lu-pei, Tainan on 11th November (S-FH) and seven **Brown Bush Warblers** *Bradypterus luteoventris*, banded at Kao-ping-hsi, Kaohsiung on 21st November (K-CH *et al.*). Also of interest were winter records of **Nordmann's Greenshank** *Tringa guttifer*, with singles at Hsia-pu, Ilan on 19th November (S-MM) and Kuan'-tu, Taipei on 1st December (C-TC). Other vagrants included a single **Eurasian Wryneck** *Jynx torquilla* at Lung-luan-tan, Pingtung on 9th October (S-CC), a **Collared Kingfisher** *Todirhamphus chloris* at Cheng-hsi-li, Tainan on 25th December (Y-TF), 13 **Dollarbirds** *Eurystomus orientalis* at Pei-tou, Taipei on 21st September (Y-YC), a **Chestnut-winged Cuckoo** *Clamator coromandus* at Szu-Tsao, Tainan on 21st October (Y-TF), four **Greylag Geese** *Anser anser* at Tung-kang, Pingtung on 25th December (L-CH), several **Bean Geese** *A. fabalis*, with five at Chin-shan, Taipei on 8th September (H-JH), five at Ta-yuan, Taoyuan on 7th November (H-WL) and four at Kao-mei, Taichung on 21st November

(M-FL), a single **American Wigeon** *Anas americana* at Szu-tsao, Tainan on 5–24th December (Y-TF), a **Ferruginous Pochard** *Aythya nyroca* at She-tzu, Taipei on 29th October (Y-HC), a **Smew** *Mergellus albellus* at Hsia-pu, Ilan on 17–19th November (Y-TL, S-MM), a **White-browed Crake** *Porzana cinerea* at Tainan on 13th November (S-MW), six **Long-billed Dowitchers** *Limnodromus scolopaceus* at Szu-Tsao, Tainan on 4th December (Y-TF), a single **Stilt Sandpiper** *Micropalama himantopus* at Ta-yuan, Taoyuan on 30th October (H-CL), a single **Eurasian Oystercatcher** *Haematopus ostralegus* at Au-ku, Chiayi on 12th November (H-FY), 12 **Common Ringed Plovers** *Charadrius hiaticula* at Ta-yuan, Taoyuan on 14th November (L-MP), two **Long-billed Plover** *C. placidus* at Tien-liao-yang, Taipei on 14–27th November (M-CH, TH), an **Oriental Plover** *C. veredus* at Putai, Chiayi on 14th August (L-LW), single **Rough-legged Buzzards** *Buteo lagopus* at Hsiou-lin, Hwalien on 5th July (H-CY), Wu-tai, Pingtung on 18th July (P-LT) and Au-ku, Chiayi on 30th September (C-YT), five **Greater Spotted Eagles** *Aquila clanga* at Ten-chih, Kaohsiung on 1st August (C-WW), an **Imperial Eagle** *A. heliaca* at Tung-shih, Taichung on 15th August (R-YK), three **Black-necked Grebe** *Podiceps nigricollis* at Hsia-pu, Ilan on 29th December (F-TL), single **Von Schrenck's Bittern** *Ixobrychus eurhythmus* at Lung-luan-tan, Pingtung on 9th October (S-CC) and Li-tze, Ilan on 3rd December (L-CH), three **Eurasian Spoonbills** *Platalea leucorodia* at Tseng-wen River, Tainan on 6th December (M-FL), a single **Black Stork** *Ciconia nigra* at Hwa-chiang-chiao, Taipei on 7th November (Y-HC), four **Rooks** *Corvus frugilegus* at Tung-shih, Chiayi on 28th December (H-CY), a single **Black-winged Cuckooshrike** *Coracina melaschistos* at Yeh-liu, Taipei on 2nd August and possibly 25th September (CC, M-CH), 21 **Ashy Minivets** *Pericrocotus divaricatus* at Jen-shan, Ilan on 19th September (P-HC), three **Ashy Drongos** *Dicrurus leucophaeus* at Yeh-liu, Taipei on 22nd September (J-CW), single **Siberian Thrushes** *Zoothera sibirica* at Taipei Botanic Garden on 11th December (CCh), Taipei airport on 30th December (C-HW) and Tien-liao-yang, Taipei on 30th December (W-FH), a **Grey-backed Thrush** *Turdus hortulorum* at Yeh-liu, Taipei on 21st November (M-CH), a **Blue-and-white Flycatcher** *Cyanoptila cyanomelana* at Yeh-liu, Taipei on 3rd November (M-CH), single **Black Redstarts** *Phoenicurus ochruros* at Chu-sui-hsi, Changhwa on 26th December (T-CL) and Yeh-liu, Taipei on 4th November (C-YC), a **Grey Bushchat** *Saxicola ferrea* at Tien-liao-yang, Taipei on 24th October (S-MW), a single **Gray's Warbler** *Locustella fasciolata* at Hsia-pu, Ilan on 5th December (S-MW), two **Dusky Warblers** *Phylloscopus fuscatus* at Yehliu, Taipei on 19th November (W-SC), two **Pallas's Leaf Warblers** *P. proregulus* at Yeh-liu, Taipei on 27th October (F-YW), single **Forest Wagtails** *Dendronanthus indicus* at Hsiao-kuan-shan, Kaohsiung on 12th September (Y-KC) and Hwalien on 23rd September (J-ST), eight **Japanese Grosbeaks** *Eophona personata* at Ping-lin, Taipei on 13th November (S-CC), two **Yellow-browed Buntings** *Emberiza chrysophrys* at Penghu Archipelago on 24th December (K-YH), a **Chestnut-eared Bunting** *E. fucata* at Tien-liao-yang, Taipei on 8th November (M-CH) and a **Tristram's Bunting** *E. tristrami* at Kuan-wu, Hsinchu on 13th November. High counts of globally threatened species included 130 **Saunders's Gulls** *Larus saundersi* at Ching-sui, Taichung on 16th December (H-CY) and 483 **Black-faced Spoonbills** *Platalea minor* at Tseng-wen Estuary on 25th December (HC).

THAILAND

An immature **Merlin** *Falco columbarius* at Tha Ton, Chiang Mai on 4–5th December 1999 (AR) and a **Blyth's Pipit** *Anthus godlewskii* at Khao Yai on 30th November–2nd December 1999 (YP) were both new to Thailand. A **Crested Myna** *Acridotheres cristatellus* at Bang Poo, Samut Prakan during 31st October–21st November (SRu, SS *et al.*), was apparently joining the large **White-vented Myna** *A. grandis* roost in the military compound: also a potential first, but the possibility of the bird being an escapee from captivity cannot be ruled out. However, genuine vagrancy or range expansion to the east might equally explain its occurrence. Recent visits to Hala-Bala Wildlife Sanctuary, Narathiwat, extreme S Thailand turned up three new species for the country: **Javan Cuckooshrike** *Coracina javensis* and **Chestnut-capped Laughingthrush** *Garrulax mitratus* on 8–9th October (UT *et al.*) and **Chestnut-backed Scimitar Babbler** *Pomatorhinus montanus*, seen collecting nest material, on 1st May (ST). **Rufous-winged Fulvetta** *Alcippe castaneceps* and **Black-eared Shrike Babbler** *Pteruthius melanotis* on 8–9th October (UT *et al.*) were new for S Thailand and **Mountain Tailorbird** *Orthotomus cuculatus* was also of interest. A recent addition to the Thai list, **Short-toed Coucal** *Centropus rectunguis* (heard in the Bala area in 1998) was both seen and heard near the BPP Camp by the Khlong Hala on 22nd and 24th April (ST). Several interesting records were reported from the Laguna Beach Club Resort area north-west Phuket Island (RM): a male **Tufted Duck** *Aythya fuligula* during 11–20th April, apparently the first from S Thailand, a pair of **Cotton Pygmy-geese** *Nettapus coromandelianus* and a pair of **River Lapwings** *Vanellus duvaucelii*. A pale morph **Booted Eagle** *Hieraaetus pennatus* was seen at Ko Phra Tong, near Golden Buddha Resort (probably near Phuket Island) on 28–29th March 1999 (RJ, BG, LH, LC, YPr) and the same observers reported **Glossy Swiftlets** *Collocalia esculenta* from the same locality on every day during 27–30th March 1999. A male **Gurney's Pitta** *Pitta gurneyi* was seen 6 km east of Khao Noi Chuchi, Khao Pra-Bang Khram Wildlife Sanctuary, at the unusually high elevation of 400 m, during 16–19th April (ABa). A female **Grey-sided Thrush** *Turdus feae* at Kaeng Krachan on 26th December 1999 (FG) was a new bird for W Thailand. Up to 31 **Ruff** *Philomachus pugnax* near Chiang Saen, Chiang Rai in March 1999 (TTa *et al.*) and an adult **Imperial Eagle** *Aquila heliaca* at Doi Wao, Nan on 10th December 1999 (ST or STh) were new for NW Thailand, as were single **Eurasian Blackbirds** *T. merula* at Huai Thungthao, Chiang Mai on 19th December 1998 and km 8–9, Doi Inthanon on 12th February 1999 (both AB) and 20 **Purple-backed Starlings** *Sturnus sturninus* at Nong Bong Khai, Chiang Rai on 7th February 1999 (TTa). Other vagrants in the north-west included a first-winter **Pallas's Gull** *Larus ichthyaetus* reported from the Mekong River at Chiang Saen on 31st January 2000 (KSu) and up to four nominate **Dark-throated Thrushes** *Turdus ruficollis ruficollis* (**Red-throated Thrush**) on the summit of Doi Inthanon during 29th December 1999–12th January 2000 (KR, ST, T, PS, RK, ST), the first for 17 years. A sighting of **Small Buttonquail** *Turnix sylvatica* in paddy stubble near Doi Saket, east of Chiang Mai in February 2000 (PR) confirms the species occurrence in the north-west. Two female **White-bellied Green Pigeons** *Treron sieboldii* were reported from near Sala Phrom Substation, Phu Khieo Wildlife Sanctuary, Chaiyaphum on 9th January 2000 (WS) and another (a potential first for NW Thailand) was reported from the approach to the summit of Doi Inthanon on 12th January 2000 (ST). **White-browed Fantails** *Rhipidura aureola* in a small area of dry dipterocarp woodland at Sap Sadao, Thap Lan National Park, Nakhon Ratchasima in December 1999 (PR, WCS) and two **Yellow-bellied Flowerpeckers** *Dicaeum melanoxanthum* at Khok Nok Kraba, Phu Luang Wildlife Sanctuary, Loei on 1st January 1999 (KS), were new for NE Thailand. A male **Grey Peacock Pheasant** *Polyplectron bicalcaratum* at Khao Yai on 30th November (YP) was very puzzling. If the species is resident in the park, surely it would have been found before now. The most likely (and rather alarming) explanation, is that one or more captive birds have been released in the park. New records from C Thailand included three **Common Pochards** *Aythya ferina* at Bung Boraphet, Nakhon Sawan on 19th January 1999 (*BCST Bulletin*, no observer given), two **Sharp-tailed Sandpipers** *Calidris acuminata* at Khok Kham, Samut Sakhon on 26–27th November (SP, YP, KR), **Dunlin** *C. alpina* at Samut Sakhon, with five on 4th January 1999 (AM) and two on 5th October (ST), and a male **Amur Falcon** *F. amurensis* at Chong Yen, Mae Wong National Park, Nakhon Sawan/Kamphaengphet on 27th September (SP,WY). Two **Little Stints** *C. minuta* reported from Ban Laem, Phetchaburi during 19th March–11th April 1999 (TTa) would also be the first from this region if accepted. Also in C Thailand, there were odd records of **Alexandrine Parakeet** *Psittacula eupatria*, with singles at Lumphini Park, Bangkok on 12th December 1998 (BCST) and in late September or early October (CB) and a pair at Kasetsart University Bangkhen Campus, Bangkok on 4th June (DP, WS), a single **Thick-billed Green Pigeon** *T. curvirostra* in Lumphini Park on 26th June (CB) and an unseasonal **Black-naped Oriole** *Oriolus chinensis* at Samsen, Bangkok on 30th July (UT). There was a good showing of **Ruddy Shelducks** *Tadorna ferruginea*,

Collared Falconet *Microbierax caerulescens* by Kamol Komolphalin with up to five at Nong Bong Khai during 30th December 1998–6th February 1999 (TTa), one on the Mekong River at Chiang Saen on 1st January 1999 (STh) and two at Bung Boraphet on 7th March 1999 (PK). Single **Mallards** *Anas platyrhynchos* were found at Nong Bong Khai on 3rd February 1999 (PKr, SK) and a pond at Mae Jo, Chiang Mai on 28th March 1999 (TTa) and there were two at Nong Bong Khai on 11–19th January 2000 (BK). During winter 1999/2000, Nong Bong Khai also hosted three **Common Shelducks** *T. tadorna* on 10th December (BK), a female **Mandarin Duck** *Aix galericulata* on 14–15th January (ST/BCST), a male **Baikal Teal** *A. formosa* on 28th January (CC, NF, CJ), apparently the first from the north-west and several **Great Crested Grebes** *Podiceps cristatus*, with one from 31st December to at least 3rd January (KSu), three (one in breeding plumage) on 15th–17th January (BCST) and two on 21st January (PR). The period under review was a good one for large waterbird records. Single **Darters** *Anhinga melanogaster* (now a rare sight in Thailand) were found at the confluence of the Moei and Sob Yuam Rivers, Mae Hongson on 24th January 1999 (CV), Pa La-u, Prachuap Khiri Khan on 24th January 1999 (TTa), Wat Asokaram on 4th March 1999 (TTa), Kasetsart University Kam Aphaengsaen Campus, Nakhon Pathom on 8th May (KUBPC) and Bung Kroeng Kavia, Kanchanaburi on 7th November (BCST). 20 **Spot-billed Pelicans** *Pelecanus philippensis* were seen in flight at km 73, Mae Wong National Park, Nakhon Sawan on 23rd May (KSu, ST), 20 were also seen in flight at Khao Cha-Ngok, Nakhon Nayok on 29th May (BCST), there were two over Kaeng Krachan Dam, Phetchaburi on 9th August (PC), five at Ban Laem, Phetchaburi on 19th September (VS, AW) and nine at Ban Samae Chai, Khao Takhrao, Phetchaburi on 10th October (PR,NT). **Painted Storks** *Mycteria leucocephala* were much in evidence, with two in flight at km 73, Mae Wong National Park on 23rd May (KSu, ST), over 80 at Ban Laem on 19th September (VS, AW), a single over Dusit Zoo, Bangkok on 1st October (PKr), up to 137 at Ban Samae Chai during 3rd–10th October (NT, PR), seven soaring over near Kalong, Samut Sakhon on 2nd October (PR, SSu), eight at the same site on 10th October (PR), four in flight near the Sports Village, Bangkok on 8th November (KR), 17 at Laem Phak Bia, Phetchaburi on 21st November (BCST) and 20 opposite the Nestlé factory, Wat Nam Daeng, Preng District, Chachoengsao on 30th December 1999 (WY). There was a **Milky Stork** *M. cinerea* on newly-drained ponds at Ban Samae Chai on 7th October (NT) and another was reported from rice paddies opposite the Nestlé factory, at Wat Nam Daeng on 30th December 1999 (WY) The waterbird colony at Ban Thasadet, Suphanburi hosted an impressive roost of 105 **Black-headed Ibises** *Threskiornis melanocephalus* on 20th January 2000 (WS). At Bang Poo, single **Black-tailed Gulls** *Larus crassirostris*, probably all first-winter birds, were seen on 10th December 1998 (NK, AW), 11th February (WS), 17th February (RJu) and 9th March 1999 (JK) and there was an adult photographed on 8th and 11th January 2000 (STh); there were up to two **Pallas's Gulls** during 10th December 1998–17th February 1999 (PR, UT, JWi, RJu *et al.*) and single **Slender-billed Gulls** *L. genei* on 2nd December 1998 (WS) and 9th March 1999 (JK). There was also a first-winter **Pallas's Gull** and a single **Lesser Crested Tern** *Sterna bengalensis* at Laem Phak Bia on 28th November (WC, WK, PR, PY). Sightings of up to two **Spoon-billed Sandpipers** *C. pygmeus* at Khok Kham during 26–27th November–31st December 1999 (SP, YP, KR, DP, PR, WS, ST *et al.*), with one reportedly present throughout winter 1999/2000 (PR), confirm that the species does winter. **Indian Pond Herons** *Ardeola grayii* were reported from two areas, with three at Ban Krasa Khao, inner Gulf of Thailand on 11th March 1999 (TTa) and two at Laem Pakarang, Phang-nga on 14th and 15th April (PLe, KSu, ST). Also of interest were a **Blyth's Kingfisher** *Alcedo hercules* reportedly photographed by the Mekong River below Rim Khong, Chiang Saen on 1st December 1999 (PLe, KSu), two **White-fronted Scops Owls** *Otus sagittatus* seen in daylight at Kaeng Krachan National Park on 26th November (WS) and 22nd January 2000 (BWG), a shock count of over 100 **Red Knot** *C. canutus* at Khok Kham on 10th January 2000 (DA, PR), a flock of over 100 **Black Kites** *Milvus migrans* at a drained prawn-pond at Wat Khao Takhrao, Ban Laem, on 23rd October (STh), **White-rumped Vultures** *Gyps bengalensis*, with five or six near Kapook Kapieng, Huai Kha Khaeng Wildlife Sanctuary, Uthai Thani on 8th January 1999 (BKe) and a juvenile reported from Doi Pha Hom Pok on 4th January 2000 (ST), two **Cinereous Vultures** *Aegypius monachus* reported captured near Rayong (on national television) on 2nd January 2000 (*per* SP), a **Greater Spotted Eagle** *A. clanga* reported from near Mae Jaem Watershed Station, Doi Inthanon on 21st October (PJ,NN), **Water Rails** *Rallus aquaticus* at Nong Bong Khai, with up to two during 30th December

1998–3rd February 1999 (TT, TTa, PKo, SK *et al.*) and one on 16–17th January 2000 (BCST), a male **Blue-fronted Robin** *Cinclidium frontale* seen well at Doi Ang Khang on 20th March 1999 (PS), a pair of **Jerdon's Bushchats** *Saxicola jerdoni* at Doi Phu Kha, Nan in late winter 1998/99 (PS), a migrant **Black-naped Monarch** *Hypothymis azurea* and two **Pale-legged Leaf Warblers** *Phylloscopus tenellipes* at Rangjan, Samut Sakhon on 2nd October (PR), a **Buff-throated Warbler** *P. subaffinis* at Khao Yai on 10th December 1999 (PR, JW), no fewer than 114 **Black-headed Greenfinches** *Carduelis ambigua* at No Leh, Doi Ang Khang on 31st December 1998 (TTa) and two **Green-tailed Sunbirds** *Aethopyga nipalensis* reported from Doi Pha Hom Pok on 31st March 1999 (TT). The only locality currently known for the latter species in the north-west is Doi Inthanon, where the endemic subspecies *angkanensis* occurs at higher levels. The following breeding records extended known seasonality in the region: a **Plain-pouched Hornbill** *Aceros subruficollis* feeding young/female in a nest cavity in the Bala area of Hala-Bala WS on 4th May (ST), a pair of **Bat Hawks** *Macheiramphus alcinus* copulating and nest-building at Hala-Bala WS on 11–15th April (PT), **Spotted Fantails** *Rhipidura perlata* nest-building, incubating and feeding young in the Bala area of Hala-Bala WS during 1st–8th May (ST), a **White-browed Shortwing** *Brachypteryx montana* carrying food near the summit of Doi Inthanon during 16–17th April (NT) and a recently fledged young **Striated Grassbird** *Megalurus palustris* at Bang Poo on 1st August (PR). A nest of **Brown Fulvetta** *Alcippe brunneicauda* with incubating adult, in the Bala area of Hala-Bala WS on 5th May (ST), appears to be the first ever documented. A record of **Grey Wagtail** *Motacilla cinerea* at Doi Ang Khang on 26th June (ST), provided a new early return date for this passage migrant/winter visitor.

VIETNAM

Two new species for Vietnam were seen in the Red River Delta at Xuan Thuy: a single **Eurasian Oystercatcher** *Haematopus ostralegus* in December 1999 (JE) and an **Asian Short-toed Lark** *Calandrella cheleensis* on 4th January 2000 (CR *et al.*/ Birdquest). Also of interest at Xuan Thuy during winter 1999/2000 were a single **Common Shelduck** *Tadorna tadorna* on 8–9th January (JE), up to three **Mallards** *Anas platyrhynchos* on 2nd and 22nd–23rd January (CR *et al.*/Birdquest, JE), two **Gadwalls** *A. strepera* and ten **Falcated Ducks** *A. falcata* on 22nd–23rd January (JE), an **Eastern Curlew** *Numenius madagascariensis* on 8–9th January (JE), ten **Nordmann's Greenshanks** *Tringa guttifer* on 22nd–23rd January (JE), two **Black-tailed Gulls** *Larus crassirostris* on 8–9th January (JE), four **Pallas's Gulls** *Larus ichthyaetus* from mid-December until at least 8–9th January (JE *et al.*) and a **Merlin** *Falco columbarius* on 2nd and 8–9th January (JE), the first from E Tonkin. Two mergansers seen on 8–9th January (JE *et al.*) were probably **Red-breasted** *Mergus serrator*, a potential new species for Vietnam and South-East Asia. The same **Common Shelduck** (or another) was seen to the south, at Thai Thuy on 29–30th January (JE). A singing male **Pygmy Blue Flycatcher** *Muscicapella hodgsoni* near Sa Pa in mid-April (EV) was the first from W Tonkin. In E Tonkin, an **Imperial Eagle** *Aquila heliaca* at Cuc Phuong National Park on 31st December 1999 (CR *et al.*/Birdquest) was encouraging, and **Black-browed Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus bistrigiceps* in the Huong Son Forest area, Ha Tinh province, during 23rd April–19th May (RT), was new for N Annam. Of great interest in the south, were a pair of **Sarus Cranes** *Grus antigone* circling with **Lesser Adjutants** *Leptoptilos javanicus* at Bao Sao, Cat Tien National Park in early February (JE). Two new species for Cochinchina had earlier been found in the park: two **Mountain Imperial Pigeons** *Ducula badia* along the road to Dac Lua on 26th and a male **Pin-tailed Green Pigeon** *Treron apicauda* with other green pigeons at Bao Oc on 28th December 1999 (CR *et al.*/Birdquest).

Observers:

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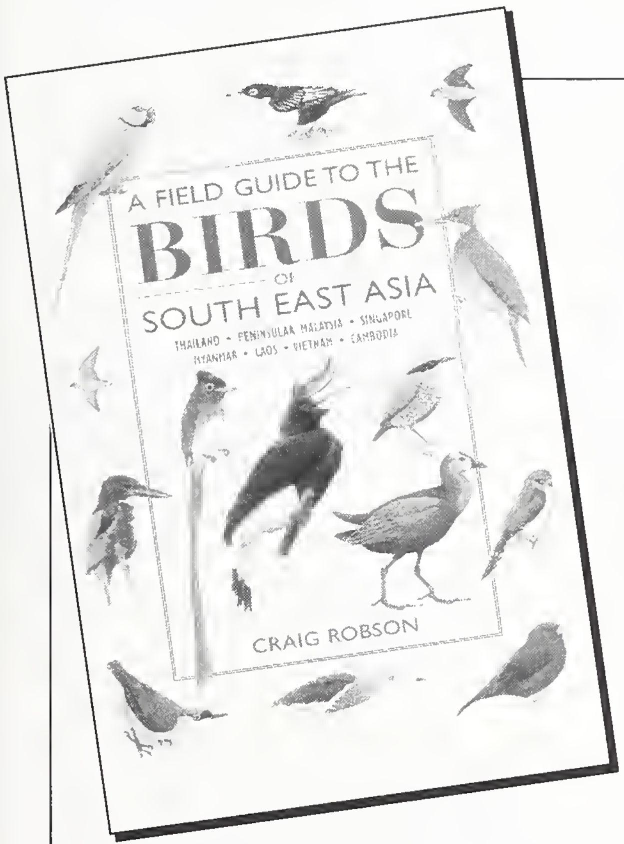

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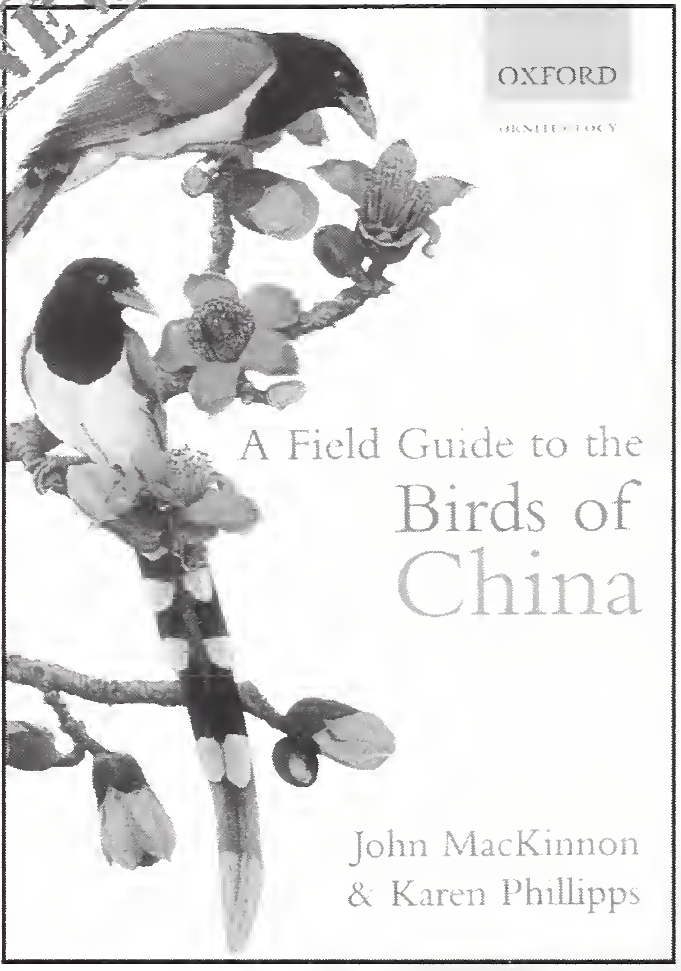

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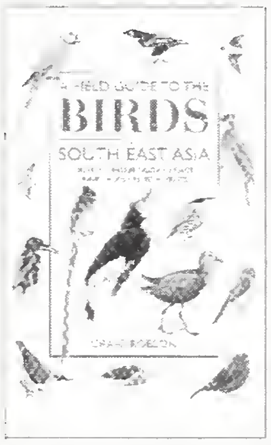

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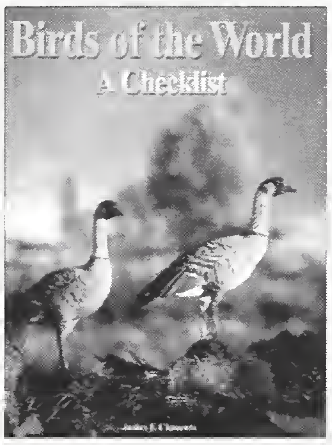

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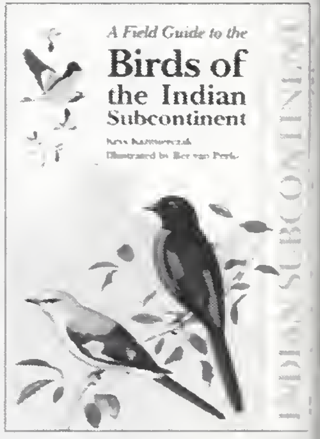

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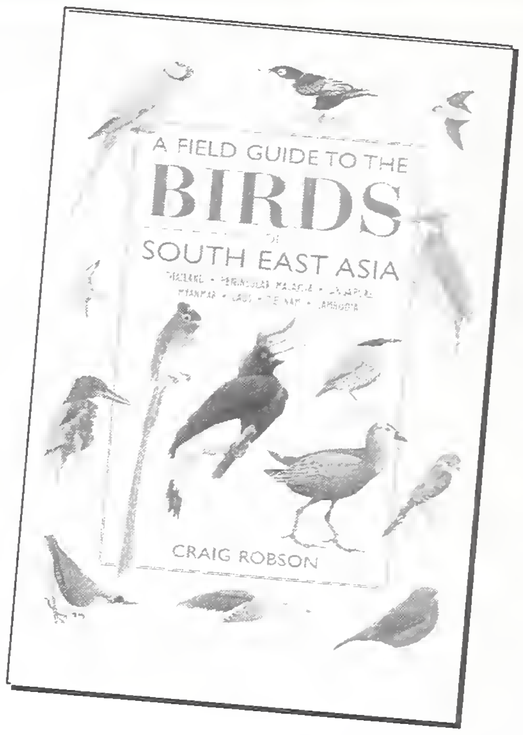
SPECIAL REVIEW

A Field Guide to the Birds of South-East Asia. By Craig Robson. New Holland, London, 2000. 504 pp. 104 colour plates. £35.00. ISBN 1 85368 313 2.



This eagerly awaited book is one of the best bird field guides to any tropical area. The existing excellent field guides to South-East Asia[1] and Thailand[2] lack the identification detail now standard in West Palaearctic guides. Robson rightly pays homage in his preface to King *et al.*[1] and states his aim as "a complete and fully illustrated book covering all the region's birds". With his reputation for attention to detail and his position as this Bulletin's compiler of *From the Field*, potential purchasers will expect a definitive work — and they will not be disappointed.

Some people may find this book difficult to use, and it might win a prize for facts per square inch of paper. Small typeface, narrow margins and clipped style are hard on the eye, but it is light in the bag. First-time visitors to the region may well decide that the gentler style of alternative guides will help them find their feet faster, but visitors to the Annamites or Myanmar will suffer if they lack Robson, and anyone wishing to identify a lot of birds certainly needs this book.

Robson says the book follows on from King *et al.*,[1] and covers a similar area, but he omits Hong Kong, Hainan and Taiwan, and adds the Coco Islands. What a pity he does not cover all of the Andamans and the faunistically similar parts of China, e.g. Hainan, southern Yunnan and Guangxi provinces.

All species ever recorded are covered, as are a few potential additions, of which some have doubtful claims already, e.g. Grey-bellied Cuckoo. More would be useful, particularly identification pitfalls such as Red-breasted Merganser (cf. Scaly-sided), Oriental Stork (cf. White), and Sakhalin Leaf Warbler (cf. Pale-legged). Apparently some established introductions are omitted, but which ones and why? New discoveries of unresolved taxonomic status (e.g. Da Lat Plateau Bullfinch) are included (provisionally, explicitly) within the closest described species, which is much better than ignoring them.

All but a dozen species are illustrated. So that they are not forgotten, they should at least have been mentioned on the plate captions. Although most of these species are well illustrated elsewhere and/or pose no identification challenge, Sacred Kingfisher, Aleutian Tern and Reed Bunting should be illustrated.

Species limits follow closely those of Inskipp *et al.*[3] Almost all divergences involve splits, and only Deignan's Babbler is lumped. Some reflect recently published work (e.g. the *assamensis* group of bushlarks, and the Golden-spectacled Warbler group), but others are the author's choice. For seven of these a one-liner says why; for *Ceyx* kingfishers the one-liner doesn't support the position and for nine others nothing is given. It should have been, and in some cases there is already-published work (e.g. *Acrocephalus tangorum*[4]). Where no explanation is given, the author should publish his reasoning elsewhere. Whether or not these new splits are merited, the finer identifications resulting may pay future dividends; after all, what use is a field sight record of a "Golden-spectacled Warbler" nowadays? The author is right to encourage identification to as fine a level as possible.

Names and sequence follow Inskipp *et al.*[3] with minor departures discussed. With other recent authoritative works also adopting these, as well as OBC, there is real hope for increasing convergence. There are a few slips, e.g. Hume's Leaf Warbler (not Hume's Warbler) within the Yellow-browed Warbler account. Some species limits and names will not be familiar to those lacking Inskipp *et al.*[3] or Sibley & Monroe,[5] so listing alternative species limits and names, as did King *et al.*[1] would have helped. Thumbnail visual indexing on the inside front cover (as in Lekagul and Round[2]) would also be useful, especially as by grouping similar-looking species together (e.g. shortwings with robins), the sequence of the plates (and the text) sometimes departs from Inskipp *et al.*[3]

Top-calibre plates are now taken for granted, and this guide delivers. The plates are painted by 14 artists and there is some variety of style. Many seem cramped and aesthetically some are more pleasing than others, but all are broadly adequate (most seem excellent) for identification; and this is a book for use not ornament. Usefully, the emphasis is on plumages most likely to be seen in the region. Intraspecific variation is better illustrated than in any alternative guide, but even so, some species could have more detail (contrast adult Red-headed Vultures with those in Grimmett *et al.*[6]), even if only in the captions, not the illustrations. Illustrating both fresh and worn *Phylloscopus* warblers is admirable, but the text should indicate when each plumage is typically seen. Flying birds should be shown for more groups, e.g. green pigeons. The caption text could highlight more clearly how to tell species apart and no indication of distribution or vocalisations is given, although both would be helpful (or at least an indication where vocalisations are especially important in identification). Robson follows King *et al.*'s[1] excellent policy of annotating misleading images, but some apparent discrepancies are not flagged, e.g. the juvenile Rufous Piculet (Plate 9) is not the bird described in the caption notes.

In the text, morphological and vocal details are impressive. The explicit by-subspecies treatment (including racially assigning all plate images) is a must for all future identification guides. Brief notes on habitat and behaviour (where helpful for identification), extralimital range and South-East Asian range complete a non-breeding species account. Breeders also get notes on season, nest and egg morphology.

Visually distinctive species are rightly given shorter shrift, to free space for challenging groups, e.g. the masterly treatment for *Hierococcyx*, *Cuculus* and *Cacomantis* cuckoos. Field identification is sometimes stated to be barely possible (e.g. the herring gull group) and more species could be flagged thus, especially for observers without substantial comparative experience. Over-confident sight records foul up the distribution and status record.

Balancing length versus detail has been done well; while there are some omissions, actual errors seem few. The adjutant text is simplistic. Information about sexing Green Peafowl is miserly — facial skin colour differences are not mentioned, nor even that males seasonally lack a train. There is no mention that River Terns in full breeding plumage occur in the non-breeding (wet) season. Plain Martin's contrastingly pale rump, a good clue, is not mentioned. Intraspecific variation is treated in more detail than in most tropical field guides. Such discussion for species covered well elsewhere is restrained, allowing more space for less well-known species. Good! Hopefully the next edition will deal with yet more variation; e.g. some female Blue-rumped Pittas lack noticeable blue on the rump under field conditions. Expansion of the text is most important for pairs of confusable species with racial variation, e.g. Red-rumped and Striated Swallows.

Lengths were compiled from scratch rather than perpetrating old errors. Wingspans, which are not given, would have been useful for aerial groups, but as the text usually indicates proportions where important for identification, this omission is mitigated. Lengths of elongated tails, given for some groups, would be useful for others, e.g. parakeets.

Transcribed vocalisations are more complete than in any other guide to the region, but expansion is possible, even for some species where voice is important in detection or identification. Additionally, more pitfalls could be pointed out, e.g. the similarity of Yellow-browed Warbler and Ruby-cheeked Sunbird under both species. The direction to study the recently-split Pale Martin's voice through sonograms in a Russian-language publication, inaccessible to most users, is irritating to say the least; why is there no summary of key features? Song seasonality would be useful for certain species, particularly where one's perception of abundance depends mainly on how many are heard, e.g. cuckoos and owls. Maybe this is impracticable for such a large area.

Habitat notes are broadly sufficient; it is good that altitudinal ranges are specific to South-East

Asia. Variation across this big region is covered well. Few, if any, accounts are misleading, although some significant information is excluded. Jerdon's Bushchat's chief breeding habitat in the region — seasonally-exposed bushland within the river channel — is not mentioned. Some altitudinal ranges omit key published information, e.g. non-breeding River Terns occur to at least 1,200 m, significantly above the 450 m limit quoted. Behavioural notes are confined to those useful in identification and there are many useful snippets, although one notable omission concerns the differing calling postures of Large-billed and Carrion Crows.

Distribution, both global and in South-East Asia, is the weakest aspect of this work. Inclusion of global ranges, while not strictly necessary, is very handy but Robson is "necessarily general and subjective". The globe is not broken into fixed units. Many species are given for both "Palaearctic" and subsections of this realm. This is useful for, e.g., parts of China, Russia, Japan, Korea, whence many of the region's migrants originate, but there is no rationale for what is listed and what is not; a species may or may not occur in east Palaearctic countries where it is not listed. Korea is particularly under-mentioned. Listing North Africa in addition to Palaearctic is superfluous. Madagascar is listed for some African species (e.g. Plain Martin), but not others (e.g. Bat Hawk). Listing of introduced populations is erratic, e.g. no mention of Eurasian Collared Doves in USA. Wording is confusing, e.g. the use of "N", vs "north" vs "northern" (see Grey Plover global range: "north Palearctic" vs "north N America", "S China" vs "southern Japan"). If the author intends different interpretations for each, I can't see what they are. Some detail seems unnecessary; e.g. what (for Eurasian Oystercatcher) does "Europe, W (east) Palearctic" mean, and is it helpful when in South-East Asia? A reversion in subsequent editions to a King *et al.*[1]-style explicitly coded global range would be a major clarification. Reference to a global standard for species' taxonomic limits would be helpful; does the omission of sub-Saharan Africa from Black Kite's breeding range mean that Robson considers Yellow-billed Kite *Milvus (migrans) parasitus* to be a separate species?

Ranges in South-East Asia are considerably sharper. Few people could produce more comprehensive and up-to-date overviews. Very few entries seem to be wrong (Blue-throated Flycatcher is listed for S instead of C Laos) but perhaps some are not mistakes; the author doubtless knows of records that I don't. Many unpublished claims (within which I include "From the Field" reports in the OBC Bulletin — see the disclaimer in any issue) are used. Major ones, e.g. Chinese Penduline Tit, are referenced. I would prefer this for all range units without explicit records in the introductory reference list. Some range accounts are ambiguous: are there solid records of Montagu's Harrier from the region or not? What is meant for Rufous-winged Buzzard in Myanmar; if it is only in north Tenasserim, why doesn't it simply say so? Lesser Whitethroat is implied to be a vagrant to all regions of Thailand; surely not? Some records published explicitly as provisional seem to have been upgraded, e.g. Blunt-winged Warbler in N Laos; doing so supports those who would discard all sight records from faunistic literature (e.g. Eames *et al.* 1999.[7]). The predictions of where a species ought to be found, e.g. Dark-rumped Swift in Myanmar, are useful, provided that they are explicit. Is Rock Pigeon really wild-living across much of the region? Birds in Laos largely or entirely roost in lofts.

Ornithological regions follow King *et al.* closely, but Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam are amended. Laos is not. King *et al.*'s[1] boundary for N-C Laos is depicted on such a small map it is ambiguous. No other public source details it, so fieldworkers in the region used a practically applicable modification.[8] Instead of adopting this, Robson used his interpretation of the King *et al.*[1] boundary and attempts to re-assign all records to N or C; inevitably there are mistakes. For example, Flavescent Bulbul records from Nam Theun Extension Area are placed by Robson in N Laos. Conversely, he has transferred the Jerdon's Bushchats at this site to C Laos. There will be confusion if people publish records new to N or C Laos under either system using Robson as a basis. Sometimes finer detail is given, e.g. southern N Laos, and this is merited. But…Great Thick-knee is not restricted in Laos to the Mekong river; and Caspian Tern is not solely coastal in the areas indicated — it is common up the Mekong as far as Stung Treng (north Cambodia).

Range/seasonal information is treated in one unit. The first split is seasonality, then regions for each season. This takes some getting used to, but bird distribution and seasonality are too complex to be boiled down to one-liners. Robson's presentation is the ideal compromise. Seasonal status is sometimes too detailed, and often too confident, for the available information. Black-winged Stilt is stated to be resident in N, C Laos, but there are too few observations to tell. That all Oriental Honey-buzzards in Laos are either resident or on passage should not be implied, and may well not be true. Many more seasonal assessments should be indicated as provisional. Some important seasonal notes are not included, e.g. there are also wet season records of Jerdon's Baza from Laos.

Indication of passage occurrence is haphazard, but trying to list regions of passage where the taxon is also a resident, breeding or wintering visitor just becomes too complex, and very little reliable information is available.

"Vagrant" is used too often: a vagrant is a bird outside its natural range, not a default term for a species with only few records. One has to be certain that the few records do not simply reflect only limited observation. Its use for Indian Skimmer in Cambodia is insupportable. There is plenty of evidence that a more plausible assessment for Cambodia would be "presumed former breeder, now extinct", much as given in the entry for Black-bellied Tern. Claiming Imperial Eagle as a vagrant to Laos is rash, and increased observation will probably show that Short-toed Snake Eagle occurs regularly in Indochina, not as a vagrant.

Some major historical changes are indicated (and carry important conservation messages), but although Little Tern is correctly described as "rare" in S Laos, it is not mentioned that it used to abound. Nor is the collapse of inland Brahminy Kites across the region noted.

Range is given by race — excellent. My only carp is that the "primary" race's range generally must be deduced by subtracting the ranges of the other races from that of the species. It can be a real headache for some species (try Black Bulbul!). Omissions compound the problem; Black-throated Tit *Aegithalos c. pulchellus* has not been found in Cambodia (as implied); birds resemble *A. c. annamensis*. For some species the range of the primary subspecies is explicit; making it so for all primary subspecies would add minimally to text length but greatly to clarity.

There are no species distribution maps. This will no doubt disappoint some readers, but maps cannot help but look detailed and comprehensive and, where bird distribution is poorly known, this is the last thing that is wanted. Written notes look coarser, but they still allow readers to know when their observations merit publication as range extensions. Moreover, maps take a huge amount of time to compile and are a nightmare to check. Thankfully, the author directed his time into producing the best text possible, rather than maps of dubious worth.

Inclusion of breeding information for species is unusual in a field guide. If it precipitates people to publish information to fill the many gaps in our knowledge, then it serves a valuable purpose. Information drawn from extralimital populations is, helpfully, explicitly indicated. Nonetheless, I would have preferred expanded discussion on how to identify, age and sex birds to fill the space currently taken by breeding.

The introductory sections are generally done well and comprise only 31 pages: this is all you need or want to carry around in an advanced identification guide. The eight-page reference list includes several in prep./in press sources, which is not surprising given the author's diligence and network, but merits praise. There is no list of abbreviations, but the scope of the glossary is good. It is useful to know how ambiguous terms such as "terrestrial" are employed. However, many species lack non-breeding territories without being "nomadic". In no morphologically meaningful sense is it true that all members of one "subspecies" differ consistently from all other conspecifics, even allowing for age/sex/seasonal/morph factors. A government conservation body is given only for Cambodia; why? Under the habitat section, the focus on conservation status is topical; although not strictly necessary in an identification guide, no opportunity should be lost to highlight the perilous regional status of level lowland forests, swamp forests, grasslands and wetlands. Artificial habitats are not discussed, although these support birds too. The use of the sloppy term "diversity" is ambiguous. Sometimes it seems to mean simply species richness, at other times taxonomic diversity or even something different.

The useful end-paper map shows altitudinal zonation and major water bodies, but why have it both front and rear – surely it would have been better to move the regional subdivision map on p. 8 to one end-paper? It would be even more useful if areas under 300 m (1,000 ft) or over 2,250 m (7,500 ft) were also discriminated. Why are only 'some' major waterbodies mapped? The lack of co-ordinates and scale bar are major annoyances, particularly as neither features on the regional subdivision map.

There are remarkably few typos for such a complex work. On Plate 9, Malaysian Honeyguide, and Plate 15, Blyth's Kingfisher, the single illustration of each is numbered "1a", although the notes refer only to "1". On Plate 10, the number "5e" does not appear. On Plate 15, Pied Kingfisher, the importance of images 16a and 16b is that they show males, not that they are adult. On Plate 67, Blue-and-white Flycatcher, there are two "13b" captions, although the images are correctly labelled. On Plate 70, Lesser Shortwing, the captions for 2c and 2d are transposed. Layout oddities are few, e.g. a typeface change in the bird list on p. 12. Certain editorial slips are habitual, e.g. "different ... to" and "this data". Plant family names should not be italicised. Throughout, the American spelling "Palearctic" is used, although other spellings are generally English.

In conclusion, this is one of the best bird field guides ever published, essential for the serious bird identifier active in the region, and also useful in neighbouring areas. Many of its features should become standard in advanced identification guides. This first edition is remarkably comprehensive and well finished. Nonetheless, in a work of this size and detail, some slips are inevitable. I share the author's hope for updated edition(s), particularly for status and distribution. All serious birders should follow his request to send him suggestions for amendments. In the meantime, the author and artists deserve our sincere thanks for producing such a superb book.

Will Duckworth

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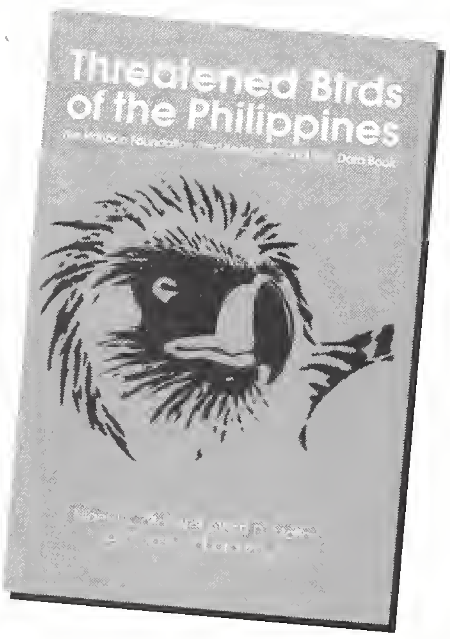
Threatened Birds of the Philippines: The Haribon Foundation/BirdLife International Red Data Book. *By Nigel J. Collar, Neil Aldrin D. Mallari & Blas R. Tabaranza, Jr. Bookmark, Makati City, Philippines. 1999. 559 pp. £37.50. ISBN 971 569 334 2.*



Of all the countries within the Oriental region, the Philippines has perhaps the most diverse and the most threatened avifauna. In global terms, the country ranks in the top ten countries with the highest numbers of restricted-range bird species and Endemic Bird Areas. Although "only" 576 bird species have been recorded in the Philippines, no fewer than 192 (33%) of these are endemic. This is a very high proportion by any standards, but many of the endemics and other resident species have different subspecies occurring on the various major islands; some of these may well be regarded as full species in the future. Furthermore, new taxa are still being described in the Philippines and there is clearly considerable scope for more ornithological discoveries.

The Philippines has been ravaged by habitat destruction for many decades and as a consequence many of its birds are threatened with extinction. A total of 74 species is considered to belong to this category: 59 residents, 6 regular migrants and 9 vagrant or extirpated species. This monumental work deals mainly with the residents and regular migrants, and it is a sobering reflection of the perilous state of the country's birds that it needs a Red Data Book all of its own.

The book begins with a 67-page introduction, divided into two parts. The first section, entitled "Background", deals with the rationale behind Red Data Books, and explains the depth of information provided in them. A detailed explanation of the IUCN categories of threatened species follows, with an assessment of the limits of "red-listing". The remaining part of this section deals with things like taxonomy, sources of information and the problems of identifying accurate localities. This book claims to follow no established taxonomy, preferring the freedom to make its own choices. Given the enormous complexity of species limits in the Philippines this is undoubtedly a sensible move. The problems of various "species" groups such as the bleeding-hearts *Gallicolumba* spp., tarictic hornbills *Penelopides* spp. and Greater Goldenback *Chrysocolaptes lucidus* are discussed.

The second introductory section, entitled "Analysis", provides an overview of the Philippine avifauna. This summary is essential reading, dealing with topics like biological richness, trends in endangerment, distribution and habitats of threatened birds, threats to Philippine birds and protected areas. Perhaps one of the most useful sections is a summary of "key sites" for each of the main islands, together with locator maps and tables indicating presence of threatened species at these sites.

Inevitably, the bulk of the book deals with accounts for the 65 species treated in detail. These range from 3–4 pages for lesser-known species to a massive 62 pages for the Philippine Eagle, a true flagship species and the country's national bird. The latter must rank as one of the longest red data book accounts ever and is a truly impressive assemblage of all that is known of the species. Like all the species accounts, it begins with a map pinpointing locations of all known records, both historical and recent. The text is divided into sections entitled Distribution, Population, Ecology, Threats, Measures taken, Measured proposed and Remarks. The level of research and scholarship is awesome, and as expected everything is fully referenced. No doubt there must be some mistakes and typographical errors in such a monumental compilation, but I found very few. The book concludes with several appendices (including brief accounts of near-threatened species), and an extensive gazetteer and bibliography.

So is there anything wrong with the book? Well, the cover is a bit dull and the illustrations inside are appalling. A number of species have photographs or paintings accompanying the accounts, but they are all in black-and-white, they are all very small and many are not even in focus. It was a nice touch to include photos, but they have certainly not been given justice. In contrast, the maps — another new feature for Red Data Books — are crisp and clear.

This important book is a must for anyone with an interest in Philippine birds, and a model of its kind. But if you do want a copy, you should not delay. The publishers, in their wisdom, only printed 500 copies (and at the time of writing, most of these were still in the Philippines).

Nigel Redman

Wild Life and Adventures in Indian Forests, from diaries of B. B. Osmaston CIE 1868–1961. *Revised edition with new appendices. Edited by Henry Osmaston. 1999. 290pp + maps and black-and-white plates. Published and distributed by Henry Osmaston, Thwaite End, Finsthwaite, Ulverstone, Cumbria LA12 8BN, UK. Price £20 + £3 p&p. ISBN 0 9518039 3 X.*

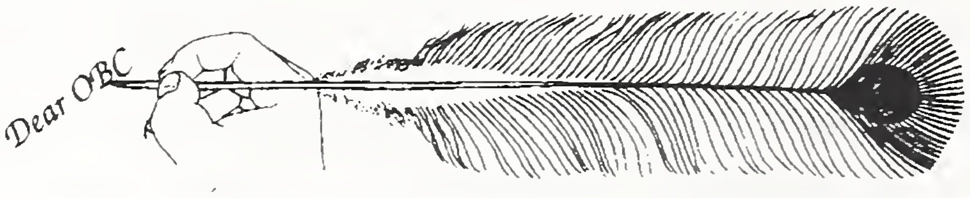
This book is a collection of extracts from the diaries kept by the author from 1888–1922, during the time he was in the Imperial Forest Service in India (and briefly in Burma). He travelled widely in India and was involved in many exciting and dangerous incidents involving tigers and other big game. He was, however, very knowledgeable about birds and other wildlife and the book provides a vivid first-hand account of some of the birds he encountered in the course of his travels, which took him to little-known places that are even more difficult to reach now than they were then. He published 52 papers about birds in India, mainly in the *Journal of the Bombay Natural History Society*, but there are many other interesting accounts that are only available in this book.

The late Bill Smythies provided an Appendix to this edition which summarises the birds mentioned in the book, with revised nomenclature referring to the names used both in the *Handbook of the Birds of India and Pakistan* (Ali & Ripley 1968–74) and the *Annotated Checklist of the Birds of the Oriental Region* (Inskipp *et al.* 1996). About 200 species of birds are mentioned and ones that I found particularly interesting were the accounts of Nicobar Megapode *Megapodius nicobariensis*, Indian Pitta *Pitta brachyura* and Slaty-legged Crake *Rallina eurizonoides* in Garhwal, and Edible-nest Swiftlets *Collocalia fuciphaga* in the Andamans.

This book gives a fascinating insight into the bird life of India a hundred years ago, and can be thoroughly recommended to anyone who would like to learn more about this topic.

Tim Inskipp

To the Editor



A new site for Gurney's Pitta?

Having seen a male Gurney's Pitta *Pitta gurneyi* at the regular breeding area at Khao Noi Chuchi, Eddie Williams and I then spent some time birding around an excellent-looking area of undisturbed rainforest situated close by. We soon heard a pitta calling and to our suprise it was a male Gurney's. During the next 40 minutes we watched it calling, feeding and preening, often quite close.

Apparently this was a new site and, at 400 m, a new altitude record for this species.

I believe that Gurney's Pittas may have some hope of surviving, despite their usual breeding area being slowly cleared for agriculture, because this sighting shows that they do move in search of new territories, albeit only a few kilometres. They also have shown that they can live in very disturbed secondary forest like Khao Noi Chuchi and in areas of undisturbed forests.

Around this new site there appeared to be several areas of good-looking forest still remaining nearby. The future may be grim but perhaps there is hope?

Ashley Banwell

Philip Round has made the following comments on this record:

The occasional appearance of Gurney's Pittas in new sites is a phenomenon of which we have been aware since about 1990. At that time, possibly as a response to the round of deforestation that took place during 1988–1990, a few birds began to appear in mature forest habitat of the foothills. As far as I know, none of these birds has been consistently present in foothills habitat since 1990 or 1992, and the logical conclusion is that such presumably displaced birds dispersed elsewhere or died out.

Based on what we have learnt from 1987 onwards, an estimate of 40 pairs/territories of Gurney's Pittas at Khao Nor Chuchi during 1986 (date of rediscovery) to 1988 is realistic. Current (1999) estimates of the population at Khao Nor Chuchi place it at 10–12 pairs.

The limited amount of ecological and behavioural information we have on Gurney's Pitta, mostly collected by earlier (1988) BirdLife surveys, and since by KNCP and DOF (BirdLife in Denmark), indicates that it displays some degree of mobility. Gurney's Pitta also appears to prefer some stages of advanced, well-watered secondary regrowth. This might give some hope for the future. One might envisage a situation where, with a possible future decline in peasant farming and abandonment of small-holdings, secondary forest could be allowed to recolonise formerly cleared areas. This might enable more opportunistic or adaptable species (Gurney's Pitta perhaps among them) to expand their ranges again.

I would certainly encourage visitors to southern Thailand to search for Gurney's Pittas and other lowland forest birds in localities away from Khao Nor Chuchi.

I would also urge visitors to make written and verbal reports of any hunting, trapping or habitat destruction they encounter at Khao Nor Chuchi to the Khao Pra-Bang Khram Wildlife Sanctuary headquarters in the village of Ban Bang Tieo. Please also report the details of your experience to: Director-General, Royal Forest Department, Phaholyothin Road, Chatuchak, Bangkok 10900 and copy also to the Province Governor, Krabi Province (Sala Klang, A. Muang, Krabi, 81000); to Bird Conservation Society of Thailand (69/12 Ramindra 24, Jarakhebua, Lardprao, Bangkok 10230, email bcst@box1.a-net.net.th); and to Philip Round, Centre for Conservation Biology, Faculty of Science, Mahidol University, Rama 6 Road, Bangkok 10400.

The decline of Red-whiskered Bulbuls in Thailand

In recent years there has been a drastic decline in the population of Red-whiskered Bulbuls *Pycnonotus jocosus* in Thailand. This decline is believed to be closely connected with the increasing popularity of the species for use in singing contests, which has resulted in large numbers of birds being taken from the wild.

Until about 1990, the Red-whiskered Bulbul was widespread and common in Thailand, especially in the north where it was even found in cities. Although no formal census has been performed, the current decline in Red-whiskered

Bulbul numbers is obvious. It has almost disappeared from the south of the country and in 1999 a drastic reduction in numbers was apparent in the north. For example, in many places in Chiang Mai where it used to be common sight, it has now become very rare.

In southern Thailand there is a tradition of keeping cage birds as pets and for singing and fighting contests. Since 1972, the popularity of singing contests has increased dramatically. Owners place caged birds close to one another so that they give out continuous territorial calls, attempting to drive the "intruder" away. This craze has now spread throughout the country and attracts much interest, particularly from the gambling fraternity. Enthusiasts have even formed a "Red-whiskered Bulbul Appreciation Club" that is actively promoting these contests.

Wild birds are favoured for competitions because they are believed to have a richer song and demand for wild birds has almost wiped out Red-whiskered Bulbuls from the south of the country and has put pressure on birds in the north. Also, because Red-whiskered Bulbuls do not breed easily in captivity, the market for wild birds continues to grow. Increasingly, people in Chiang Mai are taking birds from the wild by netting or stealing chicks from the nest and as many as 2,000 birds are transported from the region to the south of the country each month.

The Red-whiskered Bulbul is protected under the 1992 Wildlife Protection Act. Under this law, owners are required to have a licence which should be presented whenever the birds are entered for competitions. However, these regulations are not enforced and it is well known that the number of caged bulbuls in the south outnumbers the legal licences issued. The Royal Forestry Department is aware of the situation but has shown little concern, and elements of the public sector even organise and fund the singing contests.

In August 1999, the Chiang Mai provincial council organised a Red-whiskered Bulbul singing contest as part of the Lanna Flower Fair. The Lanna Bird and Nature Conservation Club (LBNCC), with assistance from the Bird Conservation Society of Thailand, made an official protest which was widely publicised in the media. As a result the contest was cancelled, one day before it was scheduled to take place.

Many Thai people still believe that keeping birds in cages is a way of showing their love for birds by taking care of them. The LBNCC wants to change this attitude by promoting birdwatching as an alternative activity for those who appreciate birds and want to learn more about them.

Rungsrit Kanjanavanit

White-capped Water Redstart *Chaimarrornis leucocephalus* by Kamol Komolphalin

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Stray Feathers

Symposium on Asian Raptors

The Second Symposium on Asian Raptors will take place in Bandung, Java from 25–27th July 2000, hosted by the Javan Hawk-eagle Working Group and the Indonesian Institute of Sciences. Following the symposium, the Asian Raptor Research and Conservation Network (ARRCN) will hold two parallel workshops on conservation priorities for Asian raptors and research methods for Asian raptors.

ARRCN will provide Asian students travel grants to attend this conference, for which students and young amateurs are encouraged to apply. Full grants will cover the cheapest round trip airfare. Partial grants may be given depending on need.

Further details from: Javan Hawk-eagle Working Group Yayasan Pribumi Alam Lestari (YPAL), Jalan Paledang 20, Cibeureum, Java, Indonesia. Email: ypal@bdg.centrin.net.id or arrc@egroups.com

Sri Lanka to host PASOC 2000

The second Pan Asian Ornithological Congress (PASOC) will take place in Kandy, Sri Lanka from 23rd–29th October 2000. Organised by the Field Ornithology Group of Sri Lanka, the theme will be Bird Conservation – Visions for the 21st Century.

Research presentations, seminars, workshops and poster sessions will be organised and there will be a mid-conference field outing and post-conference excursions. Anybody wishing to attend, present a research paper or poster, or organise a round-table discussion, should write immediately to:

The Congress Secretariat, CDC Conventions (Pvt) Ltd, 87/4 Dudley Senanayake Mawatha, Colombo 08, Sri Lanka.

Wanted: footballers!

Following the success of last year's inaugural OBC Conservation Cup football event at the British Birdwatching Fair, it is hoped that this year *two* teams from the OBC can be persuaded to join in the event. This should at least double the chances of an OBC victory! If you are interested in playing for one of these teams, please get in touch with Marcus Kohler as soon as possible. The Conservation Cup event will this year be taking place on the evening of Saturday 19th August. Anybody wishing to take part in the Conservation Cup is asked to contact Marcus Kohler, marcus@mjkohler.demon.co.uk, tel. +44 (0) 1223 501929

Striped Wren Babbler *Kenopia striata* by Kamol Komolphalin

THE ORIENTAL BIRD CLUB BULLETIN provides a forum for news, notices, recent publications, expedition results, reviews and preliminary or interim publication of studies on Oriental birds by contributors from all parts of the world. Publication of interim results in the OBC Bulletin does not preclude publication of final results as journal papers either by the OBC or elsewhere. Contributions are considered by the Editor and an Editorial Committee with contributions accepted subject to editing and refereeing where appropriate. Copies of new journals, books or reports for mention or reviewing are always welcomed. Contributions or enquiries should be sent to the Bulletin Editor, Oriental Bird Club, c/o The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire, SG19 2DL, UK.

Guidelines for contributors

Whilst the Editor is always pleased to discuss possible contributions with potential authors, and to advise on preparation, it would be helpful if the following guidelines could be adhered to:

1. **Articles** These should be written clearly, preferably typed, on one side of the page, with all lines double-spaced, leaving wide margins, and should be no longer than 2,000 words. Scientific names should appear at the first mention of each species or, if all species appear in a table, they may be given there instead. Scientific names should, where possible, follow T. Inskipp, N. Lindsey and W. Duckworth (1996) *An annotated checklist of the birds of the Oriental Region*.

   Any tables to accompany articles should be prepared on separate pieces of paper, and be thoroughly checked. Titles of tables should be self-explanatory. Diagrams should be clearly drawn, in ink, ideally 15 cm wide and 11 cm high. References should be cited in the order in which they appear during the paper in the same style used in this Bulletin.

   It would be helpful if two copies of each contribution could be submitted, and also if possible the text submitted on a computer disk, ideally in Microsoft Word, in either PC or Macintosh format.

2. **From the field** These should follow the format in the current edition of the OBC Bulletin, and be sent to the Bulletin Editor, OBC, c/o The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire, SG19 2DL, UK.

3. **News/Information** Typed or handwritten contributions should be sent to the Bulletin Editor, OBC, c/o The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire, SG19 2DL, UK.

Although every effort is made to retain all articles in their submitted form, the Editorial Committee reserves the right to make changes that it deems necessary, and, in a minimum of cases, without prior reference to the author. It is assumed that all contributors submitting material understand and accept these conditions. All contributors, photographers and artists, in submitting material for the OBC Bulletin, also give permission for their work to be used in the OBC Internet pages.

For Around the Orient, Recently Published, Stray Feathers and Free Press, the deadline for submission of material is 15th February (May Bulletin) and 15th July (October Bulletin). The deadlines do not apply to main articles which will be published as soon as possible after acceptance by the Editorial Committee.

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